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THE CANTICLE OF THE ROSE

Books by Edith Sitwell

STREET SONGS

A POET'S NOTEBOOK

PLANET AND GLOW-WORM

FANFARE FOR ELIZABETH

THE SONG OF THE COLD

A NOTEBOOK ON WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

THE CANTICLE OF THE ROSE

SELECTED POEMS

1920-1947

BY

EDITH SITWELL

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LONDON

MACMILLAN & CO. LTD

1949

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

PREFATORY NOTE

THE following poems appeared in *Street Songs*, dedicated to Osbert Sitwell : ' An Old Woman (I) ', ' Still Falls the Rain ', ' Lullaby ', ' Serenade : Any Man to Any Woman ', ' Street Song ', ' Poor Young Simpleton ', ' Once my heart was a summer rose ', ' Tattered Serenade : Beggar to Shadow ', ' Tears ', ' The Flowering Forest ', ' How Many Heavens ', ' We are the darkness in the heat of the day ', ' The Youth with the Red-Gold Hair ', ' You, the Young Rainbow ', ' Most Lovely Shade ', ' The Swans '.

The following poems appeared in *Green Song and Other Poems*, dedicated to Bryher : ' Invocation ', ' An Old Woman (II) ', ' Song for Two Voices ', ' O yet forgive ', ' Green Flows the River of Lethe — O ', ' A Mother to her Dead Child ', ' Heart and Mind ', ' Green Song ', ' Anne Boleyn's Song ', ' A Young Girl ', ' Holiday ', ' Girl and Butterfly ', ' The Queen Bee sighed ', ' O bitter love, O Death ', ' Lo, this is she that was the world's desire ', ' One Day in Spring '.

The dedication of these two books is continued in this, as the dedication of the individual poems is also continued.

E. S.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks are due to the Editors of *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Life and Letters*, *To-Day*, *New Writing and Daylight*, the 'Penguin' *New Writing*, *Orpheus*, *Orion*, *Horizon*, *Poetry London*, *View*, *Adam*, and the *Atlantic Monthly* for permission to reprint poems first published by them.

My thanks are also due to Messrs. Gerald Duckworth for their kind permission to reprint my *Early Poems*, to Messrs. Faber and Faber for their kindness in allowing me to reprint 'Lullaby' and 'Serenade', from *Poems Old and New*, and to Messrs. John Lehmann for kindly allowing me to reprint 'The Shadow of Cain'.

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EARLY POEMS

I
ELEVEN BUCOLIC COMEDIES



1. Early Spring

THE wooden chalets of the cloud
Hang down their dull blunt ropes to shroud

Red crystal bells upon each bough
(Fruit-buds that whimper). No winds slough

Our faces, furred with cold like red
Furred buds of satyr springs, long dead !

The cold wind creaking in my blood
Seems part of it, as grain of wood ;

Among the coarse goat-locks of snow
Mamzelle still drags me, to and fro ;

Her feet make marks like centaur hoofs
In hairy snow ; her cold reproofs

Die, and her strange eyes look oblique
As the slant crystal buds that creak.

If she could think me distant, she
In the snow's goat-locks certainly

Would try to milk those teats, the buds,
Of their warm sticky milk — the cuds

Of strange long-past fruit-hairy springs —
The beginnings of first earthy things.

2. *Spring*

WHEN spring begins, the maids in flocks
Walk in soft fields, and their sheepskin locks

Fall shadowless, soft as music, round
Their jonquil eyelids, and reach the ground.

Where the small fruit-buds begin to harden
Into sweet tunes in the palace garden,

They peck at the fruit-buds' hairy herds
With their lips like the gentle bills of birds.

But King Midas heard the swan-bosomed sky
Say ' All is surface and so must die.'

And he said : ' It is spring ; I will have a feast
To woo eternity ; for my least

Palace is like a berg of ice ;
And the spring winds, for birds of paradise,

With the leaping goat-footed waterfalls cold,
Shall be served for me on a dish of gold

By a maiden fair as an almond-tree,
With hair like the waterfalls' goat-locks ; she

Has lips like that jangling harsh pink rain,
The flower-bells that spirt on the trees again.'

In Midas' garden the simple flowers
Laugh, and the tulips are bright as the showers,

For spring is here ; the auriculas,
And the Emily-coloured primulas

Bob in their pinafores on the grass
As they watch the garden^{er}'s daughter pass.

Then King Midas said, ' At last I feel
Eternity conquered beneath my heel

Like the glittering snake of Paradise —
And you are my Eve ! ' — but the maiden flies,

Like the leaping goat-footed waterfalls
Singing their cold, forlorn madrigals.

3. *Aubade*

JANE, Jane,
Tall as a crane,
The morning light creaks down again ;

Comb your cockscomb-ragged hair,
Jane, Jane, come down the stair.

Each dull blunt wooden stalactite
Of rain creaks, hardened by the light,

Sounding like an overtone
From some lonely world unknown.

But the creaking empty light
Will never harden into sight,

Will never penetrate your brain
With overtones like the blunt rain.

The light would show (if it could harden)
Eternities of kitchen garden,

Cockscomb flowers that none will pluck,
And wooden flowers that 'gin to cluck.

In the kitchen you must light
Flames as staring, red and white,

As carrots or as turnips, shining
Where the cold dawn light lies whining.

Cockscomb hair on the cold wind
Hangs limp, turns the milk's weak mind. . . .

Jane, Jane,
Tall as a crane,
The morning light creaks down again !

4. *Three Poor Witches*

FOR W. T. WALTON

WHIRRING, walking
On the tree-top,
Three poor witches
Mow and mop.
Three poor witches
Fly on switches
Of a broom,
From their cottage room.
Like goat's-beard rivers,
Black and lean,
Are Moll and Meg,
And Myrrhaline.
' Of those whirring witches, Meg '
(Bird-voiced fire screams)
' Has one leg ;
Moll has two, on tree-tops see,
Goat-foot Myrrhaline has three ! '
When she walks
Turned to a wreath
Is every hedge ;
She walks beneath
Flowered trees like water
Splashing down ;
Her rich and dark silk
Plumcake gown
Has folds so stiff
It stands alone
Within the fields
When she is gone.
And when she walks
Upon the ground
You'd never know
How she can bound
Upon the tree-tops, for she creeps
With a snail's slow silver pace ;

Her milky silky wrinkled face
Shows no sign of her disgrace.
But walking on each
Leafy tree-top, —
Those old witches,
See them hop !
Across the blue-leaved
Mulberry-tree
Of the rustling
Bunchèd sea,
To China, thick trees whence there floats
From wrens' and finches' feathered throats
Songs. The North Pole is a tree
With thickest chestnut flowers. . . . We see
Them whizz and turn
Through Lisbon, churn
The butter-pats to coins gold,
Sheep's milk to muslin, thin and cold.
Then one on one leg,
One on two,
One on three legs
Home they flew
To their cottage ; there one sees
And hears no sound but wind in trees ;
One candle spills out thick gold coins
Where quilted dark with tree shade joins.

5. *Two Kitchen Songs*

I

THE harsh bray and hollow
Of the pot and the pan
Seems Midas defying
The great god Apollo !
The leaves' great golden crowns
Hang on the trees ;
The maids in their long gowns
Hunt me through these.
Grand'am, Grand'am,
From the pan I am
Flying . . . country gentlemen
Took flying Psyche for a hen
And aimed at her ; then turned a gun
On harmless chicken-me — for fun.
The beggars' dogs howl all together,
Their tails turn to a ragged feather ;
Pools, like mirrors hung in garrets,
Show each face as red as a parrot's,
Whistling hair that raises ire
In cocks and hens in the kitchen fire !
Every flame shrieks cockle-doo-doo
(With their cockscombs flaring high too) ;
The witch's rag-rug takes its flight
Beneath the willows' watery light :
The wells of water seem a-plume —
The old witch sweeps them with her broom
All are chasing chicken-me. . . .
But Psyche — where, oh where, is she ?

II

GREY as a guinea-fowl is the rain
Squawking down from the boughs again.
 ' Anne, Anne,
 Go fill the pail,'

Said the old witch who sat on the rail.
' Though there is a hole in the bucket,
Anne, Anne,
It will fill my pocket ;
The water-drops when they cross my doors
Will turn to guineas and gold moidores. . .
The well-water hops across the floors ;
Whimpering, ' Anne ' it cries, implores,
And the guinea-fowl-plumaged rain,
Squawking down from the boughs again,
Cried, ' Anne, Anne, go fill the bucket,
There is a hole in the witch's pocket —
And the water-drops like gold moidores,
Obedient girl, will surely be yours.
So, Anne, Anne,
Go fill the pail
Of the old witch who sits on the rail ! '

6. *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*

THE five-pointed crude pink tinsel star
Laughed loudly at King Cophetua ;

Across the plain that is black as mind
And limitless, it laughed unkind

To see him whitened like a clown
With the moon's flour, come in a golden crown.

The moon shone softer than a peach
Upon the round leaves in its reach ;

The dark air sparkled like a sea —
The beggar maid leaned out through a tree

And sighed (that pink flower-spike full of honey),
' Oh, for Love ragged as Time, with no money ! '

Then through the black night the gardener's boy
As sunburnt as hay, came whispering, ' Troy

Long ago was as sweet as the honey-chimes
In the flower-bells jangling into rhymes,

And, oh, my heart's sweet as a honey-hive
Because of a wandering maid, and I live

But to tend the pale flower-bells of the skies
That shall drop down their dew on her sleeping eyes.'

7. *Green Geese*

THE trees were hissing like green geese . . .
The words they tried to say were these :

‘ When the great Queen Claude was dead
They buried her deep in the potting-shed.’

The moon smelt sweet as nutmeg-root
On the ripe peach-trees’ leaves and fruit,

And her sandal-wood body leans upright,
To the gardener’s fright, through the summer night.

The bee-wing’d warm afternoon light roves
Gilding her hair (wooden nutmegs and cloves),

And the gardener plants his seedsman’s samples
Where no wild unicorn herd tramples —

In clouds like potting-sheds he pots
The budding planets in leaves cool as grots,

For the great Queen Claude when the light’s gilded gaud
Sings Miserere, Gloria, Laud.

But when he passes the potting-shed,
Fawning upon him comes the dead —

Each cupboard’s wooden skeleton
Is a towel-horse when the clock strikes one,

And light is high — yet with ghosts it winces
All night ’mid wrinkled tarnished quinces,

When the dark air seems soft down
Of the wandering owl brown.

They know the clock-faced sun and moon
Must wrinkle like the quinces soon

(That once in dark blue grass dew-dabbled
Lay) . . . those ghost-like turkeys gabbled

To the scullion baking the Castle bread —
' The Spirit, too, must be fed, be fed ;

Without our flesh we cannot see —
Oh, give us back Stupidity ! ' . . .

But death had twisted their thin speech,
It could not fit the mind's small niche —

Upon the warm blue grass outside,
They realised that they had died.

Only the light from their wooden curls roves
Like the sweet smell of nutmegs and cloves

Buried deep in the potting-shed,
Sighed those green geese, ' Now the Queen is dead.'

8. *Spinning Song*

THE miller's daughter
Combs her hair,
Like flocks of doves
As soft as vair . . .

Oh, how those soft flocks flutter down
Over the empty grassy town.

Like a queen in a crown
Of gold light, she
Sits 'neath the shadows'
Flickering tree —

Till the old dame went the way she came,
Playing bob-cherry with a candle-flame.

Now Min the cat
With her white velvet gloves
Watches where sat
The mouse with her loves —

(Old and malicious Mrs. Grundy
Whose washing-day is from Monday to Monday).

'Not a crumb,' said Min,
'To a mouse I'll be giving,
For a mouse must spin
To earn her living.'

So poor Mrs. Mouse and her three cross Aunts
Nibble snow that rustles like gold wheat plants.

And the miller's daughter
Combs her locks,
Like running water
Those dove-soft flocks ;

And her mouth is sweet as a honey-flower cold
But her heart is heavy as bags of gold.

The shadow-mice said,
' We will line with down
From those doves, our bed
And our slippers and gown,

For everything comes to the shadows at last
If the spinning-wheel Time move slow or fast.'

9. *Two Songs*

I

IN Summer when the rose-bushes
Have names like all the sweetest hushes
In a bird's song, — Susan, Hannah,
Martha, Harriet, and Susannah,
My coral neck
And my little song
Are very extra
And very Susie ;
A little kiss like a gold bee sings
My childish life so sweet and rosy . . .
Like country clouds of clouted cream
The round and flaxen blond leaves seem,
And dew in trills
And dew in pearls
Falls from every gardener's posy ;
Marguerites, roses,
A flaxen lily,
Water-chilly
Buttercups where the dew reposes,
In fact each flower young and silly
The gardener ties in childish posies.

II

THE clouds are bunchèd roses,
And the bunches seem
As thick as cream,
The country dozes, and I dream.
In a gown like a cauliflower,
My country cousin is —
So said Susie
And her sister Liz.
Blossoms hang on trees above,
Soft and thick as any dove,
They mock my love ;

Yet I pluck those feathers sweet .
With my cold coral hands so like the
Small cold feet
Of a little sad bird,
On a budding branch heard.



10. *The Bear*

WATER-GREEN is the flowing pollard
In Drowsytown ; a smocked dullard
Sits upon the noodle-
Soft and milky grass, —
Clownish-white was that fopdoodle
As he watched the brown bear pass . . .
' Who speaks of Alexander
And General Hercules,
And who speaks of Lysander ?
For I am strong as these !
The housekeeper's old rug
Is shabby brown as me,
And if I wished to hug
Those heroes, they would flee, —
For always when I show affection
They take the contrary direction.
I passed the barrack square
In nodding Drowsytown, —
Where four-and-twenty soldiers stare
Through slits of windows at the Bear,'
(So he told the Clown.)
' Twelve were black as Night the Zambo,
(Black shades playing at dumb crambo !)
Twelve were gilded as the light,
Goggling Negro eyes of fright.
There they stood and each mentero,
Striped and pointed, leaned to Zero . . .
Grumbling footsteps of the Bear
Came near . . . they did fade in air,
The window shut and they were gone ;
The Brown Bear lumbered on alone.'
So he told the smocked fopdoodle,
White and flapping as the air,
Sprawling on the grass for pillow —
(Milky soft as any noodle)
'Neath the water-green willow

There in Drowsytown
Where one crumpled cottage nods —
Nodding
Nodding
Down.

II. *On the Vanity of Human Aspirations*

'In the time of King James I, the aged Countess of Desmond met her death, at the age of a hundred and forty years, through falling from an apple-tree.'

— *A chronicle of the time.*

IN the cold wind, towers grind round,
Turning, turning, on the ground ;

In among the plains of corn
Each tower seems a unicorn.

Beneath a sad umbrageous tree
Anne, the goose-girl, could I see —

But the umbrageous tree behind
Ne'er cast a shadow on her mind —

A goose-round breast she had, goose-brains,
And a nose longer than a crane's ;

A clarinet sound, cold, forlorn,
Her harsh hair, straight as yellow corn,

And her eyes were round, inane
As the blue pebbles of the rain.

Young Anne, the goose-girl, said to me,
'There's been a sad catastrophe !

The aged Countess still could walk
At a hundred and forty years, could talk,

And every eve in the crystal cool
Would walk by the side of the clear fish-pool.

But today when the Countess took her walk
Beneath the apple-trees, from their stalk

The apples fell like the red-gold crown
Of those kings that the Countess had lived down,

And they fell into the crystal pool ;
The grandmother fish enjoying the cool —

(Like the bright queens dyed on a playing-card
They seemed as they fanned themselves, flat and hard).

Floated in long and chequered gowns
And darting, searched for the red-gold crowns

In the Castles drownèd long ago
Where the empty years pass weedy-slow,

And the water is flat as equality
That reigns over all in the heavenly

State we aspire to, where none can choose
Which is the goose-girl, which is the goose . . .

But the Countess climbed up the apple-tree,
Only to see what she could see —

Because to persons of her rank
The usual standpoint is that of the bank ! . . .’

The goose-girl smoothed down her feather-soft
Breast . . . ‘ When the Countess came aloft,

King James and his courtiers, dressed in smocks,
Rode by a-hunting the red-gold fox,

And King James, who was giving the view-halloo
Across the corn, too loudly blew,

And the next that happened was — what did I see
But the Countess fall’n from the family tree !

Yet King James could only see it was naughty
To aspire to the high at a hundred and forty,

“ Though if ” (as he said) “ she aspired to climb
To Heaven — she certainly has, this time ! ” ’

. . . And Anne, the goose-girl, laughed, ‘ Tee-hee,
It was a sad catastrophe ! ’

MARINE

*I. Switchback*

By the blue wooden sea,
Curling capriciously,
Coral and amber grots
(Cherries and apricots),
Ribbons of noisy heat,
Binding them head and feet,
Horses as fat as plums
Snort as each bumpkin comes
Giggles like towers of glass
(Pink and blue spirals) pass ;
Oh, how the Vacancy
Laughed at them rushing by !
' Turn again, flesh and brain,
Only yourselves again !
How far above the Ape,
Differing in each shape,
You with your regular,
Meaningless circles are ! '

2. *Minstrels*

BESIDE the sea, metallic bright
And sequined with the noisy light,
Duennas slowly promenade
Each like a patch of sudden shade ;

While colours like a parokeet
Shrill loudly to the chattering heat,
And gowns as white as innocence
With sudden sweetness take the sense.

Those crested paladins the waves
Are sighing to their tawny slaves
The sands, where, orange-turban'd stand,
Opaque black gems — the Negro band !

While in the purring greenery
The crowd moves like a tropic sea —
The people, sparkles from the heat
That dies from ennui at our feet.

The instruments that snore like flies
Seem mourners at Time's obsequies.
The sun, a pulse's beat, inflates
And with the band coagulates :

' A thousand years seem but a day —
Time waits for no man, yet he'll stay
Bewildered when we cross this bar
Into the Unknown — there we are ! '

Eternity and Time commence
To merge amid the somnolence
Of winding circles, bend on bend,
With no beginning and no end,

Down which they chase queer tunes that gape
Till they come close, — then just escape !
But though Time's barriers are defied
They never seem quite satisfied.

The crowds, bright sparks struck out by Time,
Pass, touch each other, never chime :
Each soul a separate entity —
Some past, some present, some to be :

But now, an empty blot of white,
Beneath the senseless shocks of light
Flashed by the tunes that cannot thrill
The nerves. Oh ! Time is hard to kill !

3. *Pedagogues*

THE air is like a jarring bell
That jangles words it cannot spell,
And black as Fate, the iron trees
Stretch thirstily to catch the breeze.

The fat leaves pat the shrinking air ;
The hot sun's patronising stare
Rouses the stout flies from content
To some small show of sentiment.

Beneath the terrace shines the green
Metallic strip of sea, and sheen
Of sands, where folk flaunt parrot-bright
With rags and tags of noisy light.

The brass band's snorting stabs the sky
And tears the yielding vacancy —
The imbecile and smiling blue
Until fresh meaning trickles through ;

And slowly we perambulate
With spectacles that concentrate,
In one short hour, Eternity,
In one small lens, Infinity.

With children, our primeval curse,
We overrun the universe —
Beneath the giddy lights of noon,
White as a tired August moon.

The air is like a jarring bell
That jangles words it cannot spell,
And black as Fate, the iron trees
Stretch thirstily to catch the breeze.

3

FAÇADE

TO SACHEVERELL SITWELL

1. *The Drum**(The Narrative of the Demon of Tedworth)*

IN his tall senatorial,
 Black and manorial,
 House where decoy-duck
 Dust doth clack —
 Clatter and quack
 To a shadow black, —
 Said the musty Justice Mompesson,
 ‘ What is that dark stark beating drum
 That we hear rolling like the sea ? ’
 ‘ It is a beggar with a pass
 Signed by you.’ ‘ I signed not one.’
 They took the ragged drum that we
 Once heard rolling like the sea ;
 In the house of the Justice it must lie
 And usher in Eternity.

.

Is it black night ?
 Black as Hecate howls a star
 Wolfishly, and whined
 The wind from very far.

In the pomp of the Mompesson house is one
 Candle that lolls like the midnight sun,

Or the coral comb of a cock ; . . . it rocks. . .
Only the goatish snow's locks
Watch the candles lit by fright
One by one through the black night.

Through the kitchen there runs a hare —
Whinnying, whines like grass, the air ;
It passes ; now is standing there
A lovely lady . . . see her eyes —
Black angels in a heavenly place,
Her shady locks and her dangerous grace.

' I thought I saw the wicked old witch in
The richest gallipot in the kitchen ! '
A lolloping galloping candle confesses.
' Outside in the passage are wildernesses
Of darkness rustling like witches' dresses.'

Out go the candles one by one
Hearing the rolling of a drum !

What is the march we hear groan
As the hoofèd sound of a drum marched on
With a pang like darkness, with a clang
Blacker than an orang-outang ?
' Heliogabalus is alone, —
Only his bones to play upon ! '

The mocking money in the pockets
Then turned black . . . now caws
The fire . . . outside, one scratched the door
As with iron claws, —

Scratching under the children's bed
And up the trembling stairs . . . ' Long dead '
Moaned the water black as crape.
Over the snow the wintry moon
Limp as henbane, or herb paris,
Spotted the bare trees ; and soon

Whinnying, neighed the maned blue wind .
Turning the burning milk to snow,
Whining it shied down the corridor —
Over the floor I heard it go
Where the drum rolls up the stair, nor tarries.

2. *Clowns' Houses*

BENEATH the flat and paper sky
The sun, a demon's eye,
Glowed through the air, that mask of glass ;
All wand'ring sounds that pass

Seemed out of tune, as if the light
Were fiddle-strings pulled tight.
The market-square with spire and bell
Clanged out the hour in Hell ;

The busy chatter of the heat
Shrilled like a paroquet ;
And shuddering at the noonday light
The dust lay dead and white

As powder on a mummy's face,
Or fawned with simian grace
Round booths with many a hard bright toy
And wooden brittle joy :

The cap and bells of Time the Clown
That, jangling, whistled down,
Young cherubs hidden in the guise
Of every bird that flies ;

And star-bright masks for youth to wear,
Lest any dream that fare
— Bright pilgrim — past our ken, should see
Hints of Reality.

Upon the sharp-set grass, shrill-green,
Tall trees like rattles lean,
And jangle sharp and dizzily ;
But when night falls they sigh

Till Pierrot moon steals slyly in,
His face more white than sin,

Black-masked, and with cool touch lays bare
Each cherry, plum, and pear.

Then underneath the veiled eyes
Of houses, darkness lies, —
Tall houses ; like a hopeless prayer
They cleave the sly dumb air.

Blind are those houses, paper-thin ;
Old shadows hid therein,
With sly and crazy movements creep
Like marionettes, and weep.

Tall windows show Infinity ;
And, hard reality,
The candles weep and pry and dance
Like lives mocked at by Chance.

The rooms are vast as Sleep within :
When once I ventured in,
Chill Silence, like a surging sea
Slowly enveloped me.

3. *Nursery Rhyme*

SAID King Pompey the emperor's ape
Shuddering black in his temporal cape
Of dust, 'The dust is everything —
The heart to love and the voice to sing,
Indianapolis
And the Acropolis,
Also the hairy sky that we
Take for a coverlet comfortably.'
Said the Bishop, 'The world is flat . . .'
But the sea-saw Crowd sent the emperor down
To the howling dust — and up went the Clown
With his face that is filched from the new young dead.
And the Tyrant's ghost and the Low-Man-Flea
Are emperor-brothers, cast shades that are red
From the tide of blood — (Red Sea, Dead Sea)
And Attila's voice or the hum of a gnat
Can usher in Eternity.

4. *Lullaby for Jumbo* 's, as she

JUMBO asleep !
Grey leaves thick-furred
As his ears, keep
Conversations blurred.
Thicker than hide
Is the trumpeting water ;
Don Pasquito's bride
And his youngest daughter
Watch the leaves
Elephantine grey :
What is it grieves
In the torrid day ?
Is it the animal
World that snores
Harsh and inimical
In sleepy pores ? —
And why should the spined flowers
Red as a soldier
Make Don Pasquito
Seem still mouldier ?

5. *Trio for Two Cats and a Trombone*

LONG steel grass —
The white soldiers pass —
The light is braying like an ass.
See
The tall Spanish jade
With hair black as nightshade
Worn as a cockade !
Flee
Her eyes' gasconade
And her gown's parade
(As stiff as a brigade).
Tee-hee !
The hard and braying light
Is zebra'd black and white,
It will take away the slight
And free
Tinge of the mouth-organ sound,
(Oyster-stall notes) oozing round
Her flounces as they sweep the ground.
The
Trumpet and the drum
And the martial cornet come
To make the people dumb —
But we
Won't wait for sly-foot night
(Moonlight, watered milk-white, bright)
To make clear the declaration
Of our Paphian vocation,
Beside the castanetted sea,
Where stalks Il Capitaneo
Swaggart braggadocio
Sword and moustachio —
He
Is green as a cassada
And his hair is an armada.
To the jade ' Come kiss me harder '

He called across the battlements as she
Heard our voices thin and shrill
As the steely grasses' thrill,
Or the sound of the onycha
When the phoca has the pica
In the palace of the Queen Chinee !

6. *Madam Mouse Trots*

‘ Dame Souris trotte gris dans le noir. ’—VERLAINE

MADAME MOUSE trots,
Grey in the black night !
Madame Mouse trots :
Furred is the light.
The elephant-trunks
Trumpet from the sea . . .
Grey in the black night
The mouse trots free.
Hoarse as a dog’s bark
The heavy leaves are furled . . .
The cat’s in his cradle,
All’s well with the world !

7. *Four in the Morning*

CRIED the navy-blue ghost
Of Mr. Belaker
The allegro Negro cocktail-shaker,
' Why did the cock crow,
Why am I lost,
Down the endless road to Infinity toss'd ?
The tropical leaves are whispering white
As water ; I race the wind in my flight.
The white lace houses are carried away
By the tide ; far out they float and sway.
White is the nursemaid on the parade.
Is she real, as she flirts with me unafraid ?
I raced through the leaves as white as water . . .
Ghostly, flowed over the nursemaid, caught her,
Left her . . . edging the far-off sand
Is the foam of the sirens' Metropole and Grand.
And along the parade I am blown and lost,
Down the endless road to Infinity toss'd.
The guinea-fowl-plumaged houses sleep . . .
On one, I saw the lone grass weep,
Where only the whimpering greyhound wind
Chased me, raced me, for what it could find.'
And there in the black and furry boughs
How slowly, coldly, old Time grows,
Where the pigeons smelling of gingerbread,
And the spectacled owls so deeply read,
And the sweet ring-doves of curded milk,
Watch the Infanta's gown of silk
In the ghost-room tall where the governante
Gesticulates lente, and walks andante.
' Madam, Princesses must be obedient ;
For a medicine now becomes expedient, —
Of five ingredients, — a diapente,'
Said the governante, fading lente . . .
In at the window then looked he,
The navy-blue ghost of Mr. Belaker,

The allegro Negro cocktail-shaker, —
And his flattened face like the moon saw she,
Rhinoceros-black (a flowing sea !).

8. *Black Mrs. Behemoth*

IN a room of the palace
Black Mrs. Behemoth
Gave way to wroth
And the wildest malice.
Cried Mrs. Behemoth,
' Come, court lady,
Doomed like a moth,
Through palace rooms shady ! '
The candle flame
Seemed a yellow pompion,
Sharp as a scorpion ;
Nobody came . . .
Only a bugbear
Air unkind,
That bud-furred papoose,
The young spring wind,
Blew out the candle.
Where is it gone ?
To flat Coromandel
Rolling on !

9. *The Wind's Bastinado*

THE wind's bastinado
Whipt on the calico
Skin of the Macaroon
And the black Picaroon
Beneath the galloon
Of the midnight sky.
Came the great Soldan
In his sedan
Floating his fan —
Saw what the sly
Shadow's cocoon
In the barracoon
Held. Out they fly.
' This melon,
Sir Mammon,
Comes out of Babylon :
Buy for a patacoon —
Sir, you must buy ! '
Said Il Magnifico
Pulling a fico —
With a stoccado
And a gambado,
Making a wry
Face : ' This corraceous
Round orchidaceous
Laceous porraceous
Fruit is a lie !
It is my friend King Pharaoh's head
That nodding blew out of the Pyramid
The tree's small corinths
Were hard as jacinths,
For it is winter and cold winds sigh . .
No nightingale
In her farthingale
Of bunchèd leaves let her singing die.

10. *En Famille*

IN the early spring-time, after their tea,
Through the young fields of the springing Bohea,
Jemima, Jocasta, Dinah, and Deb
Walked with their father Sir Joshua Jebb —
An admiral red, whose only notion
(A butterfly poised on a pigtailed ocean)
Is of the peruked sea whose swell
Breaks on the flowerless rocks of Hell.
Under the thin trees, Deb and Dinah,
Jemima, Jocasta, walked, and finer
Their black hair seemed (flat-sleek to see)
Than the young leaves of the springing Bohea ;
Their cheeks were like nutmeg-flowers when swells
The rain into foolish silver bells.
They said, ‘ If the door you would only slam,
Or if, Papa, you would once say “ Damn ” —
Instead of merely roaring “ Avast ”
Or boldly invoking the nautical Blast —
We should now stand in the street of Hell
Watching siesta shutters that fell
With a noise like amber softly sliding ;
Our moon-like glances through these gliding
Would see at her table preened and set
Myrrhina sitting at her toilette
With eyelids closed as soft as the breeze
That flows from gold flowers on the incense-trees.’

.

The Admiral said, ‘ You could never call —
I assure you it would not do at all !
She gets down from table without saying “ Please,”
Forgets her prayers and to cross her T’s,
In short, her scandalous reputation
Has shocked the whole of the Hellish nation ;
And every turbaned Chinoiserie,
With whom we should sip our black Bohea,

·Would stretch out her simian fingers thin
To scratch you, my dears, like a mandoline ;
For Hell is just as properly proper
As Greenwich, or as Bath, or Joppa ! ’

II. *Country Dance*

THAT hobnailed goblin, the bob-tailed Hob,
Said, 'It is time I began to rob.'
For strawberries bob, hob-nob with the pearls
Of cream (like the curls of the dairy girls),
And flushed with the heat and fruitish-ripe
Are the gowns of the maids who dance to the pipe.
Chase a maid?
She's afraid!
'Go gather a bob-cherry kiss from a tree,
But don't, I prithee, come bothering me!'
She said —
As she fled.
The snouted satyrs drink clouted cream
'Neath the chestnut-trees as thick as a dream;
So I went,
And I leant,
Where none but the doltish coltish wind
Nuzzled my hand for what it could find.
As it neighed,
I said,
'Don't touch me, sir, don't touch me, I say!
You'll tumble my strawberries into the hay.'
Those snow-mounds of silver that bee, the spring,
Has sucked his sweetness from, I will bring
With fair-haired plants and with apples chill
For the great god Pan's high altar . . . I'll spill
Not one!
So, in fun,
We rolled on the grass and began to run
Chasing that gaudy satyr the Sun;
Over the haycocks, away we ran
Crying, 'Here be berries as sunburnt as Pan!'
But Silenus
Has seen us. . . .
He runs like the rough satyr Sun.

Come away!

12. *Mariner Men*

‘ WHAT are you staring at, mariner man,
Wrinkled as sea-sand and old as the sea ? ’
‘ Those trains will run over their tails, if they can,
Snorting and sporting like porpoises ! Flee
The burly, the whirligig wheels of the train,
As round as the world and as large again,
Running half the way over to Babylon, down
Through fields of clover to gay Troy town —
A-puffing their smoke as grey as the curl
On my forehead as wrinkled as sands of the sea ! —
But what can that matter to you, my girl ?
(And what can that matter to me ?) ’

13. *The Octogenarian*

THE octogenarian
Leaned from his window,
To the valerian
Growing below
Said, ' My nightcap
Is only the gap
In the trembling thorn
Where the mild unicorn
With the little Infanta
Danced the lavolta
(Clapping hands : molto
Lent' eleganta).'
The man with the lanthorn
Peers high and low ;
No more
Than a snore
As he walks to and fro. . . .
Il Dottore the stoic
Culls silver herb
Beneath the superb
Vast moon azoic.

14. *Fox Trot*

OLD

Sir

Faulk,

Tall as a stork,
Before the honeyed fruits of dawn were ripe, would walk,
And stalk with a gun
The reynard-coloured sun,
Among the pheasant-feathered corn the unicorn has torn,
forlorn the
Smock-faced sheep
Sit

And

Sleep ;

Periwigged as William and Mary, weep . . .
' Sally, Mary, Mattie, what's the matter, why cry ? '
The huntsman and the reynard-coloured sun and I sigh ;
' Oh, the nursery-maid Meg
With a leg like a peg
Chased the feathered dreams like hens, and when they
laid an egg
In the sheepskin
Meadows
Where
The serene King James would steer
Horse and hounds, then he
From the shade of a tree
Picked it up as spoil to boil for nursery tea,' said the
mourners. In the
Corn, towers strain,
Feathered tall as a crane,
And whistling down the feathered rain, old Noah goes
again —
An old dull mome
With a head like a pome,
Seeing the world as a bare egg,
Laid by the feathered air ; Meg

Would beg three of these
For the nursery teas
Of Japhet, Shem, and Ham ; she gave it
Underneath the trees,
Where the boiling
Water
 Hissed,
Like the goose-king's feathered daughter — kissed
Pot and pan and copper kettle
Put upon their proper mettle,
Lest the Flood — the Flood — the Flood begin again
 through these !

15. *Polka*

‘ “ TRA la la la —

See me dance the polka,”

Said Mr. Wagg like a bear,

“ With my top-hat

And my whiskers that —

(Tra la la la) trap the Fair.

Where the waves seem chiming haycocks

I dance the polka ; there

Stand Venus’ children in their gay frocks, —

Maroon and marine, — and stare

To see me fire my pistol

Through the distance blue as my coat ;

Like Wellington, Byron, the Marquis of Bristol,

Buzbied great trees float.

While the wheezing hurdy-gurdy

Of the marine wind blows me

To the tune of ‘Annie Rooney’, sturdy,

Over the sheafs of the sea ;

And bright as a seedsman’s packet

With zinnias, candytufts chill,

Is Mrs. Marigold’s jacket

As she gapes at the inn door still,

Where at dawn in the box of the sailor,

Blue as the decks of the sea,

Nelson awoke, crowed like the cocks,

Then back to the dust sank he.

And Robinson Crusoe

Rues so

The bright and foxy beer, —

But he finds fresh isles in a Negress’ smiles, —

The poxy doxy dear,

As they watch me dance the polka,"
Said Mr. Wagg like a bear,
"In my top-hat and my whiskers that, —
Tra la la la, trap the Fair.

Tra la la la la —
Tra la la la la —
Tra la la la la la la la
La
La
La ! ” ’

16. *Jodelling Song*

' WE bear velvet cream,
Green and babyish
Small leaves seem ; each stream
Horses' tails that swish,

And the chimes remind
Us of sweet birds singing,
Like the jangling bells
On rose-trees ringing.

Man must say farewell
To parents now,
And to William Tell,
And Mrs. Cow.

Man must say farewells
To storks and Bettes,
And to roses' bells,
And statuettes.

Forests white and black
In spring are blue
With forget-me-nots,
And to lovers true

Still the sweet bird begs
And tries to cozen
Them : " Buy angels' eggs
Sold by the dozen."

Gone are clouds like inns
On the gardens' brinks,
And the mountain djinns, —
Ganymede sells drinks ;

While the days seem grey,
And his heart of ice,

Grey as chamois, or
The edelweiss,

And the mountain streams
Like cowbells sound —
Tirra lirra, drowned
In the waiter's dreams

Who has gone beyond
The forest waves,
While his true and fond
Ones seek their graves.'

17. *Waltz*

DAISY and Lily,
Lazy and silly,
Walk by the shore of the wan grassy sea, —
Talking once more 'neath a swan-bosomed tree.
Rose castles,
Tourelles,
Those bustles
Where swells
Each foam-bell of ermine,
They roam and determine
What fashions have been and what fashions will be, —
What tartan leaves born,
What crinolines worn.
By Queen Thetis,
Pelisses
Of tarlatine blue,
Like the thin plaided leaves that the castle crags grew ;
Or velours d'Afrande :
On the water-gods' land
Her hair seemed gold trees on the honey-cell sand
When the thickest gold spangles, on deep water seen,
Were like twanging guitar and like cold mandoline,
And the nymphs of great caves,
With hair like gold waves,
Of Venus, wore tarlatine.
Louise and Charlottine
(Boreas' daughters)
And the nymphs of deep waters,
The nymph Taglioni, Grisi the ondine,
Wear plaided Victoria and thin Clementine
Like the crinolined waterfalls ;
Wood-nymphs wear bonnets, shawls,
Elegant parasols
Floating are seen.
The Amazons wear balzarine of jonquille
Beside the blond lace of a deep-falling rill ;

Through glades like a nun
They run from and shun
The enormous and gold-rayed rustling sun ;
And the nymphs of the fountains
Descend from the mountains
Like elegant willows
On their deep barouche pillows,
In cashmere Alvandar, barège Isabelle,
Like bells of bright water from clearest wood-well.
Our élégantes favouring bonnets of blond,
The stars in their apiaries,
Sylphs in their aviaries,
Seeing them, spangle these, and the sylphs fond
From their aviaries fanned
With each long fluid hand
The manteaux espagnols,
Mimic the waterfalls
Over the long and the light summer land.

So Daisy and Lily,
Lazy and silly,
Walk by the shore of the wan grassy sea,
Talking once more 'neath a swan-bosomed tree.
Rose castles,
Tourelles,
Those bustles !
Mourelles
Of the shade in their train follow.
Ladies, how vain, — hollow, —
Gone is the sweet swallow, —
Gone, Philomel !

18. *Popular Song*

FOR CONSTANT LAMBERT

LILY O'GRADY,
Silly and shady,
Longing to be
A lazy lady,
Walked by the cupolas, gables in the
Lake's Georgian stables,
In a fairy tale like the heat intense,
And the mist in the woods when across the fence
The children gathering strawberries
Are changed by the heat into Negresses,
Though their fair hair
Shines there
Like gold-haired planets, Calliope, Io,
Pomona, Antiope, Echo, and Clio.
Then Lily O'Grady,
Silly and shady,
Sauntered along like a
Lazy lady :
Beside the waves' haycocks her gown with tucks
Was of satin the colour of shining green ducks,
And her fol-de-rol
Parasol
Was a great gold sun o'er the haycocks shining,
But she was a Negress black as the shade
That time on the brightest lady laid.
Then a satyr, dog-haired as trunks of trees,
Began to flatter, began to tease,
And she ran like the nymphs with golden foot
That trampled the strawberry, buttercup root,
In the thick gold dew as bright as the mesh
Of dead Panōpe's golden flesh,
Made from the music whence were born
Memphis and Thebes in the first hot morn,
— And ran, to wake
In the lake,

20. *Dark Song*

THE fire was furry as a bear
And the flames purr . . .
The brown bear rambles in his chain
Captive to cruel men
Through the dark and hairy wood.
The maid sighed, ' All my blood
Is animal. They thought I sat
Like a household cat ;
But through the dark woods rambled I . . .
Oh, if my blood would die ! '
The fire had a bear's fur ;
It heard and knew. . . .
The dark earth furry as a bear,
Grumbled too !

21. *I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside*

WHEN

Don

Pasquito arrived at the seaside
Where the donkey's hide tide brayed, he
Saw the banditto Jo in a black cape
Whose slack shape waved like the sea —
Thetis wrote a treatise noting wheat is silver
like the sea ; the lovely cheat is sweet as
foam ; Erotis notices that she

Will

Steal

The

Wheat-king's luggage, like Babel
Before the League of Nations grew —
So Jo put the luggage and the label
In the pocket of Flo the Kangaroo.
Through trees like rich hotels that bode
Of dreamless ease fled she,
Carrying the load and goading the road
Through the marine scene to the sea.
' Don Pasquito, the road is eloping
With your luggage, though heavy and large ;
You must follow and leave your moping
Bride to my guidance and charge ! '

When

Don

Pasquito returned from the road's end,
Where vanilla-coloured ladies ride
From Sevilla, his mantilla'd bride and young
friend
Were forgetting their mentor and guide.
For the lady and her friend from Le Touquet
In the very shady trees upon the sand

Were plucking a white satin bouquet
Of foam, while the sand's brassy band
Blared in the wind. Don Pasquito
Hid where the leaves drip with sweet . . .
But a word stung him like a mosquito . . .
For what they hear, they repeat !

22. *Hornpipe*

SAILORS come
To the drum
Out of Babylon ;
 Hobby-horses
Foam, the dumb
Sky rhinoceros-glum

Watched the courses of the breakers' rocking-horses and
 with Glaucis,
Lady Venus on the settee of the horsehair sea !
Where Lord Tennyson in laurels wrote a gloria free,
In a borealic iceberg came Victoria ; she
Knew Prince Albert's tall memorial took the colours of
 the floreal
And the borealic iceberg ; floating on they see
New-arisen Madam Venus for whose sake from far
Came the fat and zebra'd emperor from Zanzibar
Where like golden bouquets lay far Asia, Africa, Cathay,
All laid before that shady lady by the fibroid Shah.
Captain Fracasse stout as any water-butt came, stood
With Sir Bacchus both a-drinking the black tarr'd grapes'
 blood
Plucked among the tartan leafage
By the furry wind whose grief age
Could not wither — like a squirrel with a gold star-nut.
Queen Victoria sitting shocked upon the rocking horse
Of a wave said to the Laureate, ' This minx of course
Is as sharp as any lynx and blacker-deeper than the drinks
 and quite as
Hot as any hottentot, without remorse !
 For the minx,'
 Said she,
 ' And the drinks,
 You can see
Are hot as any hottentot and not the goods for me ! '

COLONEL FANTOCK

TO OSBERT AND SACHEVERELL SITWELL

THUS spoke the lady underneath the trees :
 I was a member of a family
 Whose legend was of hunting — (all the rare
 And unattainable brightness of the air) —
 A race whose fabled skill in falconry
 Was used on the small song-birds and a winged
 And blinded Destiny. . . . I think that only
 Winged ones know the highest eyrie is so lonely.
 There in a land, austere and elegant,
 The castle seemed an arabesque in music ;
 We moved in an hallucination born
 Of silence, which like music gave us lotus
 To eat, perfuming lips and our long eyelids
 As we trailed over the sad summer grass,
 Or sat beneath a smooth and mournful tree.

And Time passed, suavely, imperceptibly.

But Dagobert and Peregrine and I
 Were children then ; we walked like shy gazelles
 Among the music of the thin flower-bells.
 And life still held some promise, — never ask
 Of what, — but life seemed less a stranger, then,
 Than ever after in this cold existence.
 I always was a little outside life —
 And so the things we touch could comfort me ;
 I loved the shy dreams we could hear and see —
 For I was like one dead, like a small ghost,
 A little cold air wandering and lost.

All day within the straw-roofed arabesque
Of the towered castle and the sleepy gardens wandered
We ; those delicate paladins the waves
Told us fantastic legends that we pondered.

And the soft leaves were breasted like a dove,
Crooning old mournful tales of untrue love.

When night came, sounding like the growth of trees,
My great-grandmother bent to say good-night,
And the enchanted moonlight seemed transformed
Into the silvery tinkling of an old
And gentle music-box that played a tune
Of Circean enchantments and far seas ;
Her voice was lulling like the splash of these.
When she had given me her good-night kiss,
There, in her lengthened shadow, I saw this
Old military ghost with mayfly whiskers, —
Poor harmless creature, blown by the cold wind,
Boasting of unseen unreal victories
To a harsh unbelieving world unkind :
For all the battles that this warrior fought
Were with cold poverty and helpless age —
His spoils were shelters from the winter's rage.
And so for ever through his braggart voice,
Through all that martial trumpet's sound, his soul
Wept with a little sound so pitiful,
Knowing that he is outside life for ever
With no one that will warm or comfort him. . . .
He is not even dead, but Death's buffoon
On a bare stage, a shrunken pantaloon.
His military banner never fell,
Nor his account of victories, the stories
Of old apocryphal misfortunes, glories
Which comforted his heart in later life
When he was the Napoleon of the schoolroom
And all the victories he gained were over
Little boys who would not learn to spell.

All day within the sweet and ancient gardens
He had my childish self for audience —
Whose body flat and strange, whose pale straight hair
Made me appear as though I had been drowned —
(We all have the remote air of a legend) —
And Dagobert my brother whose large strength,
Great body and grave beauty still reflect
The Angevin dead kings from whom we spring ;
And sweet as the young tender winds that stir
In thickets when the earliest flower-bells sing
Upon the boughs, was his just character ;
And Peregrine the youngest with a naïve
Shy grace like a faun's, whose slant eyes seemed
The warm green light beneath eternal boughs.
His hair was like the fronds of feathers, life
In him was changing ever, springing fresh
As the dark songs of birds . . . the furry warmth
And purring sound of fires was in his voice
Which never failed to warm and comfort me.

And there were haunted summers in Troy Park
When all the stillness budded into leaves ;
We listened, like Ophelia drowned in blond
And fluid hair, beneath stag-antlered trees ;
Then, in the ancient park the country-pleasant
Shadows fell as brown as any pheasant,
And Colonel Fantock seemed like one of these.
Sometimes for comfort in the castle kitchen
He drowsed, where with a sweet and velvet lip
The snapdragons within the fire
Of their red summer never tire.
And Colonel Fantock liked our company ;
For us he wandered over each old lie,
Changing the flowering hawthorn, full of bees,
Into the silver helm of Hercules,
For us defended Troy from the top stair
Outside the nursery, when the calm full moon
Was like the sound within the growth of trees.

But then came one cruel day in deepest June,
When pink flowers seemed a sweet Mozartian tune,
And Colonel Fantock pondered o'er a book.
A gay voice like a honeysuckle nook —
So sweet, — said, ' It is Colonel Fantock's age
Which makes him babble.' . . . Blown by winter's rage
The poor old man then knew his creeping fate,
The darkening shadow that would take his sight
And hearing ; and he thought of his saved pence
Which scarce would rent a grave. . . . That youthful voice
Was a dark bell which ever clanged ' Too late ' —
A creeping shadow that would steal from him
Even the little boys who would not spell —
His only prisoners. . . . On that June day
Cold Death had taken his first citadel.

6

THREE RUSTIC ELEGIES

1. *The Little Ghost Who Died for Love*

FOR ALLANAH HARPER

Deborah Churchill, born in 1678, was hanged in 1708 for shielding her lover in a duel. His opponent was killed, her lover fled to Holland, and she was hanged in his stead, according to the law of the time. The chronicle said 'Though she died at peace with God, this malefactor could never understand the justice of her sentence, to the last moment of her life'.

' FEAR not, O maidens, shivering
As bunches of the dew-drenched leaves
In the calm moonlight . . . it is the cold sends quivering
My voice, a little nightingale that grieves.

Now Time beats not, and dead Love is forgotten . . .
The spirit too is dead and dank and rotten,

And I forget the moment when I ran
Between my lover and the sworded man —

Blinded with terror lest I lose his heart.
The sworded man dropped, and I saw depart

Love and my lover and my life . . . he fled
And I was strung and hung upon the tree.
It is so cold now that my heart is dead
And drops through time . . . night is too dark to see

Him still. . . . But it is spring ; upon the fruit-boughs
of your lips,
Young maids, the dew like India's splendour drips,

Pass by among the strawberry beds, and pluck the berries
Cooled by the silver moon ; pluck boughs of cherries

That seem the lovely lucent coral bough
(From streams of starry milk those branches grow)
That Cassiopeia feeds with her faint light,
Like Æthiopia ever jewelled bright.

Those lovely cherries do enclose
Deep in their sweet hearts the silver snows,

And the small budding flowers upon the trees
Are filled with sweetness like the bags of bees.

Forget my fate . . . but I, a moonlight ghost,
Creep down the strawberry paths and seek the lost

World, the apothecary at the Fair.
I, Deborah, in my long cloak of brown
Like the small nightingale that dances down
The cherried boughs, creep to the doctor's bare
Booth . . . cold as ivy in the air,

And, where I stand, the brown and ragged light
Holds something still beyond, hid from my sight.

Once, plumaged like the sea, his swanskin head
Had wintry white quills . . . " Harken to the Dead . . .
I was a nightingale, but now I croak
Like some dark harpy hidden in night's cloak,
Upon the walls ; among the Dead, am quick ;
Oh, give me medicine, for the world is sick ;
Not medicines, planet-spotted like fritillaries
For country sins and old stupidities,
Nor potions you may give a country maid
When she is lovesick . . . love in earth is laid,

Grown dead and rotten ” . . . so I sank me down,
Poor Deborah in my long cloak of brown.
Though cockcrow marches, crying of false dawns,
Shall bury my dark voice, yet still it mourns
Among the ruins, — for it is not I
But this old world, is sick and soon must die ! ’

2. *The Hambone and the Heart*

TO PAVEL TCHELITCHEW

A Girl speaks :

' HERE in this great house in the barrack square,
The plump and heart-shaped flames all stare
Like silver empty hearts in wayside shrines.
No flame warms ever, shines,
Nor may I ever tire.

Outside, the dust of all the dead
Thick on the ground is spread,
Covering the tinsel flowers
And pretty dove-quick hours.

O dust of all the dead, my heart has known
That terrible Gehenna of the bone
Deserted by the flesh, — with Death alone !

Could we foretell the worm within the heart,
That holds the households and the parks of heaven,
Could we foretell that land was only earth,
Would it be worth the pain of death and birth,
Would it be worth the soul from body riven ?

For here, my sight, my sun, my sense,
In my gown white as innocence,
I walked with you. Ah, that my sun
Loved my heart less than carrion !

Alas ! I dreamed that the bare heart could feed
One who with death's corruption loved to breed, —
This Dead, who fell, that he might satisfy
The hungry grave's blind need, —

That Venus stinking of the Worm !
Deep in the grave, no passions storm :

The worm's a pallid thing to kiss !
She is the hungry grave that is

Not filled, that is not satisfied !
Not all the sunken Dead that lie
Corrupt there, chill her luxuries.

And fleet, and volatile her kiss,
For all the grave's eternities !
And soon another Dead shall slake
Her passion, till that dust, too, break.

Like little pigeons small dove-breasted flowers
Were cooing of far-off bird-footed showers,
My coral neck was pink as any rose
Or like the sweet pink honey-wax that grows,
Or the fresh coral beams of clear moonlight,
Where leaves like small doves flutter from our sight.

Beneath the twisted rose-boughs of the heat
Our shadows walked like little foreigners,
Like small unhappy children dressed in mourning —
But could not understand what we were saying,
Nor could we understand their whispered warning.
There by the waterfalls we saw the Clown,
As tall as Heaven's golden town,
And in his hands, a Heart, and a Hambone
Pursued by loving vermin ; but deserted, lone,
The Heart cried to my own :

The Heart speaks :

Young girl, you dance and laugh to see
The thing that I have come to be.
Oh, once this heart was like your own !
Go, pray that yours may turn to stone.

This is the murdered heart of one
Who bore and loved an only son.

For him, I worked away mine eyes :
My starved breast could not still his cries.

My little lamb, of milk bereft . . .
My heart was all that I had left.
Ah, could I give thee this for food,
My lamb, thou knowest that I would.

Yet lovely was the summer light
Those days . . . I feel it through this night.
Once Judas had a childish kiss,
And still his mother knows but this.

He grew to manhood. Then one came,
False-hearted as Hell's blackest shame
To steal my child from me, and thrust
The soul I loved down to the dust.

Her hungry wicked lips were red
As that dark blood my son's hand shed ;
Her eyes were black as Hell's own night ;
Her ice-cold breast was winter-white.

I had put by a little gold
To bury me when I was cold.
That fangèd wanton kiss to buy,
My son's love willed that I should die.

The gold was hid beneath my bed, —
So little, and my weary head
Was all the guard it had. They lie
So quiet and still who soon must die.

He stole to kill me while I slept,
The little son who never wept,
But that I kissed his tears away
So fast, his weeping seemed but play.

So light his footfall. Yet I heard
Its echo in my heart and stirred
From out my weary sleep to see
My child's face bending over me.

The wicked knife flashed serpent-wise,
Yet I saw nothing but his eyes
And heard one little word he said,
Go echoing down among the Dead.

They say the Dead may never dream.
But yet I heard my pierced heart scream
His name within the dark. They lie
Who say the Dead can ever die.

For in the grave I may not sleep,
For dreaming that I hear him weep.
And in the dark, my dead hands grope
In search of him. O barren hope !

I cannot draw his head to rest,
Deep down upon my wounded breast :
He gave the breast that fed him well
To suckle the small worms of Hell !

The little wicked thought that fed
Upon the weary helpless Dead,
They whispered o'er my broken heart, —
They struck their fangs deep in the smart.

' The child she bore with bloody sweat
And agony has paid his debt.
Through that bleak face the stark winds play,
The crows have chased his soul away, —

His body is a blackened rag
Upon the tree, — a monstrous flag,'

Thus one worm to the other saith.
Those slow mean servitors of Death,

They chuckling, said : ' Your soul grown blind
With anguish, is the shrieking wind
That blows the flame that never dies
About his empty lidless eyes.'

I tore them from my heart, I said :
' The life-blood that my son's hand shed —
That from my broken heart outburst,
I'd give again to quench his thirst.

He did no sin. But cold blind earth
The body was that gave him birth.
All mine, all mine the sin. The love
I bore him was not deep enough.'

The Girl speaks :

O crumbling heart, I too, I too have known
The terrible Gehenna of the bone
Deserted by the flesh. . . . I too have wept
Through centuries, like the deserted bone,
To all the dust of all the Dead to fill
That place. . . . It would not be the dust I loved !

For underneath the lime-tree's golden town
Of Heaven, where he stood, the tattered Clown
Holding the screaming Heart and the Hambone,
You saw the Clown's thick hambone, life-pink carrion,
That Venus perfuming the summer air.
Old pigs, starved dogs, and long worms of the grave
Were rooting at it, nosing at it there :
Then you, my sun, left me and ran to it
Through pigs, dogs, grave-worms' ramparted tall waves.

I know that I must soon have the long pang
Of grave-worms in the heart. . . . You are so changed,
How shall I know you from the other long
Anguishing grave-worms ? I can but foretell
The worm where once the kiss clung, and that last less
chasm-deep farewell.

3. *The Ghost Whose Lips were Warm*

FOR GEOFFREY GORER

'T. M., Esq., an old acquaintance of mine, hath assured me, that . . . after his first wife's death, as he lay in bed awake . . . his wife opened the Closet Door, and came into the Chamber by the Bed side, and looked upon him and stooped down and kissed him ; her Lips were warm, he fancied they would have been cold. He was about to have Embraced her, but was afraid it might have done him hurt. When she went from him, he asked her when he should see her again ? She turned about and smiled, but said nothing.' — *Miscellanies collected by John Aubrey, Esq., F.R.S., 1696.*

' THE ice, weeping, breaks.

But my heart is underground.

✓ And the ice of its dead tears melts never. Wakes
No sigh, no sound,

From where the dead lie close, as those above —
The young — lie in their first deep night of love, ✓

✓ When the spring nights are fiery with wild dew, and rest
Leaves on young leaves, and youthful breast on breast.

The dead lie soft in the first fire of spring
And through the eternal cold, they hear birds sing,

And smile as if the one long-treasured kiss
Had worn away their once-loved lips to this

Remembered smile — for there is always one
Kiss that we take to be our grave's long sun.

Once Time was but the beat of heart to heart ;
And one kiss burnt the imperfect woof apart

Of this dead world, and summer broke from this :
We built new worlds with one immortal kiss.

Sun of my life, she went to warm the dead,
And I must now go sunless in their stead.

✓ They clothed a dead man in my dress. By day
He walks the earth, by night he rots away ;

So walks a dead man, waning, in my dress,
By black disastrous suns of death grown less,

Grown dim and shrunken, wax before a fire,
A shrunken apeish thing, blackened and dire.

This black disastrous sun yet hath no heat.
How shall I bear my heart without its beat,

My clay without its soul, my eternal bone
That cries to its deserting flesh, alone,

More cold than she is in her grave's long night,
That hath my heart for covering, warmth, and light !

But when she had been twelve months in her grave
She came where I lay in my bed : she gave

Her kiss. And oh, her lips were warm to me.
And so I feared it, dared not touch and see

If still her heart were warm . . . dust-dun, death-cold
Lips should be from death's night. I dared not hold

That heart that came warm from the grave . . . afraid,
I tore down all the earth of death, and laid

Its endless cold upon her heart. For this
Dead man in my dress dared not kiss

Her who laid by death's cold, lest I
Should feel it when she came to lie

Beside my heart. My dead love gave
Lips warm with love though in her grave.

I stole her kiss, the only light
She had to warm her eternal night.'

NOTE.—For later version of this, see 'One Day in Spring', page 216.

Through mulberry-trees a candle's thick gold thread, —
So seems the summer sun to the sad Dead ;
That cackling candle's loud cacophonies
Will wake not Plato, Aristophanes,

For all their wisdom. There in the deep groves
They must forget Olympus and their loves,
Lying beneath the coldest flower we see
On the young green-blooming strawberry.

The nymphs are dead like the great summer roses ;
Only an Abyssinian wind dozes —
Cloyed with late honey are his dark wings' sheens,
The gorge on these long crags, nymphs bright as queens

But now be h elegant footsteps through light leaves,
No bustles selegiac air now grieves, —
Beside the litt leaves are sere and whisper dead
And plumeles:gances lost and fled.

Nor sparks as wore pelisses of tissue
Mirror the blue or violet, or deep blue,
Where tree:sofest flower-bells of the seas.
In winter, under thick swan-bosomed trees

The colours most in favour were marine,
Blue Louise, gris bois, grenate, myrtle green ;
Beside the ermine bells of the lorn foam —
Those shivering flower-bells — nymphs light-footed roam

No more, nor walk within vast, bear-furred woods
Where cross owls mocked them from their leafy hoods,
And once, the ermine leaves of the cold snow
Seemed fashion leaves of eighty years ago. —

When first as thin as young Prince Jamie's plaid
The tartan leaves upon the branches laid
Showed feathered flowers as brown as any gannet,
And thin as January or as Janet, —

Chione, Cleopatra, Boreas' daughters
Walked beside the stream's drake-plumaged waters
In crinolines of plaided sarsenet,
Scotch caps, where those drake-curling waters wet

Their elegant insteps.— Household nymphs must wear
For humble tasks the ponceau gros d'hiver, —
(Tisiphone the Fury, like a dire
Wind raising up Balmoral towers of fire).

Another wind's small drum through thin leaves taps,
And Venus' children wearing their Scotch caps
Or a small toque hongroise that is round-brimmed,
And with a wing from Venus' pigeons trimmed,

Run now with hoops and dolls they call ' cher
Chase Cupid in his jacket artilleur,
Play on the cliffs where like the goats' thick
The coarse grass grows, and clamber on the

Above the forest, whence he shot the does,
Was Jupiter's vast shooting-box of snows —
His blunderbuss's ancient repercussions
Fired but pears and apples, furred as Russians.

He threw his gun down and began to curse,
When up ran Venus' children with their nurse :
' See, Grandpapa, rocks like Balmoral's towers
Held still these brown and gannet-plumaged flowers.'

Then underneath the hairy and the bestial
Skies of winter ripening, a celestial
Bucolic comedy of subtle meaning
Grew with rough summer suns, until with preening

Of soft bird-breasted leaves, again we knew
The secret of how hell and heaven grew.
Where walked great Jupiter, and like a peasant
Shot the partridge, grouse, and hare, and pheasant.

In the gods' country park there was a farm
Where all the gentle beasts came to no harm,
Left to run wild. And there in that great wood
Was Juno's dairy, cold as any bud,

With milk and cream, as sweet and thick as yellow
Apricots and melons, in the mellow
Noon when dairy maids must bear it through
Lanes full of trilling flowers and budding dew.

And then beside the swanskin pool where pansies
And strawberries and other pretty fancies
With the wild cherries sing their madrigals,
The goddesses walked by the waterfalls ;

But now beside the water's thin flower-bells
No bustles seem rose castles and tourelles
Beside the little lake that seems of thin
And plumeless and too delicate swanskin ;

Nor sparks and rays from calèche wheels that roll
Mirror the haycocks with gilt rays like Sol
Where trees seemed icebergs, — rose and green reflections
Of the passing nymphs and their confections. —

In summer, when nymph Echo was serene
On these lone crags walked many a beauteous queen,
As lovely as the light and spangled breeze
Beside the caves and myrtle groves and trees.

One wood-nymph wore a deep black velvet bonnet
With blackest ivy leaves for wreaths upon it, —
Shading her face as lovely as the fountains
While she descended from deep-wooded mountains,

And with the wood-gods hiding, Charlottine,
Boreas' daughter, wore a crinoline.
So fair with water-flowing hair was she,
That crinoline would shine from crag and tree.

When the gold spangles on the water seen
Were like the twanging of a mandoline,
And all the ripples were like ripest fruits
That grow from the deep water's twisted roots,

The water-nymph, dark Mademoiselle Persane,
On blond sands wore an Algerine turbane ;
Of blue velours d'Afrique was the pelisse
Of Grisi the ondine, and like the fleece

Of water gods, or gold trees on the strand,
Her gold hair fell like fountains on the sand, —
The thick gold sand beside the siren waves, —
Like honey-cells those sands and fountain caves.

Dream of the picnics where trees, sylvan, wan,
Shaded our feasts of nightingale and swan,
With wines as plumed as birds of paradise,
Or Persian winds, to drown the time that flies !

Then, on the shaven ice-green grass one sees
Roses and cherries and ripe strawberries
Bobbing at our lips like scarlet fire
Between the meshes of the light's gold wire,

And the bacchantes with their dew-wet hair,
Like velvety dark leaves of vineyards, wear
Great bunchèd tufts of African red coral
Whose glints with sheen of dew and leaves now quarrel.

Here in a sheep-thick shade of tree and root
Nymphs nurse each fawn whose pretty golden foot
Skipped there. They, milk of flaxen lilies, sip
From a sweet cup that has a coral lip,

In that green darkness. Melons dark as caves
Held thick gold honey for their fountain waves,
And there were gourds as wrinkled dark as Pan,
Or old Silenus, — figs whence jewels ran.

There in the forest, through the green baize leaves,
Walked Artemis, and like the bound-up sheaves
Of gilt and rustling-tressèd corn, her arrows
Through greenhouses of vegetable marrows

She aimed ; like the vast serres-chaudes of the lake,
Those greenhouses her arrows then did break !
Her dress was trimmed with straw, her hair streamed bright
And glittering as topaz, chrysolite.

Among their castles of gold straw entwined
With blackest ivy buds and leaves, and lined
With lambs' wool, and among the cocks of hay,
The satyrs danced the sheep-trot all the day,

In wooded gardens where the green baize leaves
Hid fruit that rustled like Ceres' gilt sheaves
They danced the galloppade and the mazurka,
Cracoviak, cachucha, and the turka,

With Fauna and the country deities,
Pan's love Eupheme, and the Hyades, —
Phaola and Ambrosia and Eudora,
Panope and Eupompe with great Flora,

Euryale, the Amazonian queen
Whose gown is looped above the yellow sheen
Of her bright yellow petticoat, — the breeze
Strewed wild flowers on her straw hat through the trees :

And country nymphs with round straw hats deep-brimmed,
And at one side with pheasants' feathers trimmed, —
With gowns of green mohair, and high kid boots
Wherewith they trample radish, strawberry, roots.

But far are we from the forests of our rest
Where the wolf Nature from maternal breast
Fed us with strong brown milk . . . those epochs gone,
Our eyeless statues weep from blinded stone.

And far are we from the innocence of man,
When Time's vast sculptures from rough dust began,
And natural law and moral were but one, —
Derived from the rich wisdom of the sun.

In those deep ages the most primitive
And roughest and uncouthest shapes did live
Knowing the memory of before their birth,
And their soul's life before this uncouth earth.

We could remember in that ancient time
Of our primeval innocence, a clime
Divined deep in the soul, in which the light
Of vaster suns gave wisdom to our sight ;

Now, days like wild beasts desecrate each part
Of that forgotten tomb that was our heart ;
There are more awful ruins hanging there
Than those which hang and nod at empty air.

Yet still our souls keep memories of that time
In sylvan wildernesses, our soul's prime
Of wisdom, forests that were god's abode,
And Saturn marching in the Dorian mode.

But all the nymphs are dead. The sound of fountains
Weeps swan-soft elegies to the deep mountains, —
Repeats their laughter, mournful now and slow,
To the dead nymph Echo. Long ago

Among the pallid roses' spangled sheens
On these lone crags nymphs that were bright as queens
Walked with elegant footsteps through light leaves .
Where now a dark-winged southern wind soft grieves,

So cloyed with honey he must close his wing.
No ondine Grisi now may rise to sing,
For the light leaves are sere and whisper dead
Echoes of elegances lost and fled.

The nymphs are dead. And yet when spring begins
The nation of the Dead must feel old sins
Wake unremembering bones, eternal, old
As Death. Oh, think how these must feel the cold

In the deep groves ! But here these dead still walk
As though they lived, and sigh awhile, and talk.
O perfumed nosegay brought for noseless Death !
This brightest myrrh can not perfume that breath.

The nymphs are dead, — Syrinx and Dryope
And that smooth nymph that changed into a tree.
But though the shade, that Æthiopia, sees
Their beauty make more bright its treasures,

Their amber blood in porphyry veins still grows
Deep in the dark secret of the rose,
Though dust are their bright temples in the heat,
The nymph Parthenope with golden feet.

My glittering fire has turned into a ghost,
My rose is now cold amber and is lost ;
Yet from that fire you still could light the sun,
And from that amber, bee-winged motes could come ;

Though grown from rocks and trees, dark as Saint Anne,
The little nun-like leaves weep our small span,
And eyeless statues in the garden weep
For Niobe who by the founts doth sleep,

In gardens of a fairy aristocracy
That lead downhill to mountain peaks of sea,
Where people build like beavers on the sand
Among life's common movements, understand

That Troy and Babylon were built with bricks ;
They engineer great wells into the Styx
And build hotels upon the peaks of seas
Where the small trivial Dead can sit and freeze.

Still ancient fanfares sound from mountain gorges
Where once Prometheus lit enormous forges :
' Debout les morts ! ' No key when the heart closes :
The nymphs are dead like the great summer roses.

But Janet, the old wood-god Janus' daughter,
All January-thin and blond as water,
Runs through the gardens, sees Europa ride
Down to the great Swiss mountains of the tide,

Though in the deep woods, budding violets
And strawberries as round as triplets
Beneath their swanskin leaves feel all alone. . . .
The golden feet that crushed them now are gone.

Beside the Alps of sea, each crinoline
Of muslin and of gauze and grenadine
Sweeps by the Mendelssohnian waterfall,
O'er beaver-smooth grass, by the castle wall,

Beside the thick mosaic of the leaves.
Left by the glamour of some huger eves
The thick gold spangles on those leaves are seen
Like the sharp twanging of a mandoline ;

And there, with Fortune, I too sit apart
Feeling the jewel turn flower, the flower turn heart,
Knowing not goddess's from beggar's bones,
Nor all death's gulf between those semitones.

We who were proud and various as the wave, —
What strange companions the unreasoning grave
Will give us . . . wintry Prudence's empty skull
May lie near that of Venus the dead trull !

There are great diamonds hidden in the mud
Waiting Prometheus' fire and Time's vast flood ;
Wild glistening flowers that spring from these could know
The secret of how hell and heaven grow.

But at a wayside station near the rock
Where vast Prometheus lies, another bock
Is brought by Ganymede . . . why dream the Flood
Would save those diamonds hidden in the mud ?

The farmer on his donkey now rides down
The mountain side, with angels' eggs the town
Will buy, beside the mountain peaks of sea
And gardens of the fairy aristocracy,

And ladies in their carriages drive down
The mountain to the gardens of the town,
And the hot wind, that little Savoyard,
Decked them with wild flowers à la montagnard.

The wood-nymphs Nettie, Alexandrine, tear
Balmoral gowns made for this mountain wear, —
White veils ; each Fauchon-émigré bonnet
Bears coronets of berries wild upon it ;

Huge as the great gold sun, each parasol
That hides it ; fluid zephyrs now extol
Antiope's short bell-shaped pelerine
Worn lest gauze ribbons of the rain be seen.

' Oh the blond hair of Fortune in the grove !
Lean from your carriage, hold her lest she rove.'
' Her face is winter, wrinkled, peaceless, mired,
Black as the cave where Cerberus was sired. —

O soul, my Lazarus ! 'There was a clime
Deep in your tomb of flesh, defying time,
When a god's soul played there, began to dance
Deep in that tomb with divine, deathless Chance.

But that huge god grew wearied of our game
And all the lion-like waterfalls grew tame.
Venus, a statue mouldering on the wall,
Noiseless and broken now, forgetting all

The fanfares, knows that Phoebus gilds her still
On pastoral afternoons ; but she is chill.
Venus, you too have known the anguished cold,
The crumbling years, the fear of growing old !

Here in this theatre of redistributions,
This old arena built for retributions,
We rose imperial from primeval slime
Through architecture of our bones by Time ;

Now Night like lava flows without a chart
From unremembering craters of the heart,
Anguished with their dead fires. — Beneath the caves
And crags the Numidean Sibyl raves ;

We hear the sibyl crying Prophecy.
“ There where the kiss seems immortality
I prophesy the Worm . . . there, in the kiss,
He'll find his most imperial luxuries.” ’

.

Where mountains, millers' dusty bags, seem full
Of Priam's gold, and all the black sheep's wool
Of thunderstorms, and grass in forests floats
As green as Tyrolean peasants' petticoats,

Dead Venus drove in her barouche, her shawl
As mauve as mountain distance covering all,
As she swept o'er the plain with her postillions
That were black and haughty as Castillians.

There, high above the thickest forests were
The steepest high-walled castles of the air ;
And paths led to those castles that were bordered
With great gardens, neat and walled and ordered,

With rivers, feathered masks, and pots of peas
Mournful beneath the vast and castled trees,
Where gardeners clip the strange wind's glittering fleece.
Oh, how that wind can blow through a pelisse !

Miss Ellen and Miss Harriet, the ondines,
Bore baskets full of velvet nectarines
And walnuts, over wooden trellised bridges
That cross the streams and the steep mountain ridges.

They wore straw-coloured crinolines of faille
Beneath their shady bonnets made of paille, —
Their melancholy laughter ever sounds
Through castled trees and over castle grounds.

But I am sad, and by the wrinkled lake,
Where the great mauve flowers will never wake,
But drip with sleep and dew, I read this thin,
Dry, withered book of delicate swanskin,

And find a tale of an Olympian glade
Where Psyche has become a kitchenmaid ;
The world, that pitiful old catchpenny,
Whines at her booth for pence, and finds too many —

Showing the gods no larger than ourselves,
And twittering bird-like from the rocky shelves
Of this Olympus, and no prophecy
They roar, but whisper triviality.

The ancient castle wall of Chaos nods.
Through gaps of ruined air and withered pods
A showman came ; he smiles like Time and mocks
Me, takes his marionettes from their small box —

The gods, Time-crumbled into marionettes.
Death frays their ageless bodies, hunger frets
Them, till at last, like us, they dance
Upon the old dull string pulled now by Chance.

This is the game the apeish shuddering dust
Plays for the market and the house of lust ;
There are a thousand deaths the spirit dies
Unknown to the sad Dead that we despise.

Still ladies in their carriages drive down
The mountain to the gardens of the town,
And the hot wind, that little Savoyard,
Decked them with wild flowers à la montagnard.

Rich as a tomb each dress ! oh, pity these !
I think the rich died young, and no one sees
The young loved face show for a fading while
Through that death-mask, the sad and cynic smile.

.
These living skeletons blown by the wind
Were Cleopatra, Thais . . . age unkind
Has shrunk them so feeble and so small
That Death will never comfort them at all.

They are so poor they seem to have put by
The outworn fashion of the flesh ! They lie
Naked and bare in their mortality
Waiting for Death to warm them, childishly.

Do these Dead, shivering in their raggedness
Of outworn flesh, know us more dead, and guess
How day rolls down, that vast eternal stone,
Shuts each in his accustomed grave, alone ?

Round the eternal skeleton their dress
Is rags ; our mountain-high forgetfulness
Through centuries is piled above the Dead,
Waiting in vain for some remembered tread

Upon this rock-bound march that all we made
To the eternal empire of the shade, —
To the small sound of Time's drum in the heart.
The sound they wait for dies, the steps depart.

Come not, O solemn and revengeful Dead, —
Most loving Dead, from your eternal bed
To meet this living ghost, lest you should keep
Some memory of what I was, and weep.

9

FIVE SONGS

TO GEORGIA SITWELL

1. *Daphne*

HEAT of the sun that maketh all men black, —
They are but Æthiopian shades of thee —
Pour down upon this wild and glittering fleece
That is more rich than feathers of bright birds,
The ripening gems, the drops of the still night.
I parch for that still shade, my heat of love
That parched those ripening gems hath withered me.

Come with the African pomp and train of waves,
Give me your darkness, my immortal shade,
Beside the waterwells my heart hath known!
The shepherds hairy-rough as satyrs come,
Bring up their fleeces that are waterfull
With freshness clear as precious gums of trees
Where weep the incense-trees from some deep smart.
So the fresh water from your fleece flows in
To fill with richness all my desert heart.

2. *The Peach Tree*

BETWEEN the amber portals of the sea
The gilded fleece of heat hangs on my tree ;
My skin is bright as this . . .
Come, wind, and smooth my skin, bright as your kiss !

Less bright, less bright than Fatima's gold skin,
My gilded fleece that sighs
' She is the glittering dew born of the heat,
She is that young gazelle, the leaping Sun of Paradise.'

Come, Nubian shade, smooth the gilt fleece's curl,
Until your long dark fluid hands unfold
My peach, that cloud of gold,
Its kernel, crackling amber water-cold.

Shine, Fatima, my Sun, show your gold face
Through panached ostrich plumes of leaves, then from
above
My ripening fruits will feel the bright dew fall apace,
Till at your feet I pour my golden love.

3. *The Strawberry*

BENEATH my dog-furred leaves you see
The creeping strawberry
In a gold net
The footprints of the dew have made more wet.

Mahomet resting on a cloud of gold
Dreamed of the strawberry
Made of the purpling gauzy heat
And jasper dust trod by his golden feet. —

The jasper dust beside
The fountain tide,
The water jacinth-cold,
The water-ripples like mosaics gold
Have made my green leaves wide and water-cold.

From palaces among the widest leaves
My Sun, my Fatima,
Shows her gold face and sighs,
And darkness dies.

At noon my Fatima, my bright gazelle,
Walks by each gauzy bell
Of strawberries made of such purpling air
As the heat knows, and there

When Fatima, my dew with golden foot,
Comes like all the music of the air
Then shine my berries till those golden footsteps
die —
Like all the glittering desert of the air when the
hot sun goes by.

4. *The Greengage Tree*

FROM gold-mosaic'd wave
And from the fountain cave
Grew my dark-plumaged leaves all green and fountain-
cold,

My minarets of gold,

Mosaic'd like the tomb,
Far in the forest gloom,
Of water-lovely Fatima in forests far away.
The gardener doth sway

The branches and doth find
(As wrinkled dark and kind
As satyrs) these with satyrs' straw beards twined
By that gold-fingered arborist the wind.

Among thick leaves the shade
Seems like a cavalcade,
Or Artemus plume-helmeted from a sylvan serenade,
Or Amazon's ambassade.

A Caliph plays a lute,
A gardener plays a flute,
Then from my feathered stem a most delightful gust,
a glittering sea
Grows in my rich fruit.

And each bird-angel comes
To sip dark honey from my plums,
My rich green amber gums
That make puffed feather sleeves, long feathered
skirts all gold,
And sticky from the dew my golden net doth hold.

5. *The Nectarine Tree*

THIS rich and swan-skin tree has grown
From the nymphs' amber blood and bone.

What laughter falls like rain or tears
Among my boughs, what golden shears ?

Come gardener, and tie
With your long beard of bass
(So like the winds' fair hair)
The pillars of my tree, and win
The wind to me.

Smooth as the amber skin
Of fair Parthenope,
And that smooth nymph that changed into a tree
Each swan-soft silver skin,
Or like Parthenope's smooth voice that falls like amber,
Or moonlight falling in her deep sea-tinselled chamber.

IO
GOLD COAST CUSTOMS
TO HELEN ROTHAM

In Ashantee, a hundred years ago, the death of any rich or important person was followed by several days of national ceremonies, during which the utmost licence prevailed, and slaves and poor persons were killed that the bones of the deceased might be washed with human blood. These ceremonies were called Customs.

ONE fantee wave
Is grave and tall
As brave Ashantee's
Thick mud wall.
Munza rattles his bones in the dust,
Lurking in murk because he must.

Striped black and white
Is the squealing light ;
The dust brays white in the market place,
Dead powder spread on a black skull's face.

Like monkey-skin
Is the sea — one sin
Like a weasel is nailed to bleach on the rocks
Where the eyeless mud screeched fawning, mocks

At a Negro that wipes
His knife . . . dug there,
A bugbear bellowing
Bone dared rear —
A bugbear bone that bellows white
As the ventriloquist sound of light,

It rears at his head-dress of felted black hair
The one humanity clinging there —

His eyeless face whitened like black and white bones
And his beard of rusty
Brown grass cones.

Hard blue and white
Cowrie shells (the light
Grown hard) outline
The leopard-skin musty
Leaves that shine
With an animal smell both thick and fusty.

One house like a rat-skin
Mask flaps fleet
In the sailor's tall
Ventriloquist street
Where the rag houses flap —
Hiding a gap.

Here, tier on tier
Like a black box rear
In the flapping slum
Beside Death's docks.
I did not know this meaner Death
Meant this : that the bunches of nerves still dance
And caper among these slums, and prance.

‘ Mariners, put your bones to bed ! ’
But at Lady Bamburgher's parties each head,
Grinning, knew it had left its bones
In the mud with the white skulls . . . only the grin
Is left, strings of nerves, and the drum-taut skin.

When the sun in the empty
Sky is high
In his dirty brown and white
Bird-skin dress —
He hangs like a skull
With a yellow dull
Face made of clay

(Where tainted, painted, the plague-spots bray)
To hide where the real face rotted away.

So our worm-skin and paper masks still keep,
Above the rotting bones they hide,
The marks of the Plague whereof we died :
The belief,
The grief,
The love,
Or the grin
Of the shapeless worm-soft unshaping Sin —
Unshaping till no more the beat of the blood
Can raise up the body from endless mud
Though the hell-fires cold
As the worm, and old,
Are painted upon each unshaped form —
No more man, woman, or beast to see —
But the universal devouring Worm.

When the sun of dawn looks down on the shrunken
Heads, drums of skin, and the dead men drunken,
I only know one half of my heart
Lies in that terrible coffin of stone,
My body that stalks through the slum alone.
And that half of my heart
That is in your breast
You gave for meat
In the sailor's street
To the rat that had only my bones to eat.

But those hardened hearts
That roll and sprawl,
In a cowl of foul blind monkey-skin,
Lest the whips of the light crash roaring in —
Those hearts that roll
Down the phantom street
They have for their beat
The cannibal drums
And the cries of the slums,
And the Bamburgher parties — they have them all !

One high house flaps . . . taps
Light's skin drum —
Monkey-like shrunk
On all fours now come
The parties' sick ghosts, each hunting himself -
Black gaps beneath an ape's thick pelt,

Chasing a rat,
Their soul's ghost fat
Through the Negro swamp,
Slum hovel's cramp,
Of Lady Bambergher's parties above
With the latest grin, and the latest love,
And the latest game :
To show the shame
Of the rat-fat soul to the grinning day
With even the rat-skin flayed away.

Now, a thick cloud floating
Low o'er the lake,
Millions of flies
Begin to awake,
With the animation
Of smart conversation :
From Bedlam's madness the thick gadflies
Seek for the broken statue's eyes.

Where the mud and the murk
Whispering lurk :
' From me arises everything,
The Negro's louse,
The armadillo,
Munza's bone and his peccadillo ' —

Where flaps degraded
The black and sated
Slack macerated
And antiquated
Beckoning Negress
Nun of the shade,

And the rickety houses
Rock and rot,
Lady Bamburgher airs
That foul plague-spot
Her romantic heart.
From the cannibal mart,
That smart Plague-cart,
Lady Bamburgher rolls where the foul news-
sheet
And the shambles for souls are set in the
street.

And stuck in front
Of this world-tall Worm,
Stuck in front
Of this world's confession —
Like something rolled
Before a procession,
Is the face, a flimsy worm-skin thing
That someone has raked
From the low plague-pit
As a figure-head
For Corruption dead,
And a mask for the universal Worm.

Her ape-skin yellow
Tails of hair
Clung about her bone-white bare
Eyeless mask that cackled there :

The Worm's mask hid
Her eyeless mud,
Her shapeless love,
The plot to escape
From the God-ordained shape

And her soul, the cannibal
Amazon's mart,

Where in squealing light
And clotted black night
On the monkey-skin black and white striped dust they
Cackle and bray to the murdered day.

And the Amazon queen
With a bone-black face
Wears a mask with an ape-skin beard ; she grinds
Her male child's bones in a mortar, binds
Him for food, and the people buy. For this

Hidden behind
The Worm's mask grown
White as a bone
Where eyeholes rot wide
And are painted for sight,
And the little mouth red as a dead Plague-spot
On that white mask painted to hide Death's rot,

For this painted Plague-cart's
Heart, for this
Slime of the Worm that paints her kiss
And the dead men's bones round her throat and wrist,
The half of my heart that lay in your breast
Has fallen away
To rot and bray
With the painted mud through the eyeless day.

The dust of all the dead can blow
Backwards and forwards, to and fro
To cover the half of my heart with death's rot,
Yet the dust of that other half comes not
To this coffin of stone that stalks through the slum ;
Though love to you now is the deaf Worm's lust
That, cloven in halves, will re-unite
Foulness to deadness in the dust
And chaos of the enormous night.

How far is our innocent paradise,
The blue-striped sand,
Bull-bellowing band
Of waves, and the great gold suns made wise
By the dead days and the horizons grand.

Can a planet tease
With its great gold train,
Walking beside the pompous main —
That great gold planet the heat of the Sun
Where we saw black Shadow, a black man, run,
So a Negress dare
Wear long gold hair ?
The Negress Dorothy one sees
Beside the caverns and the trees,
Where her parasol
Throws a shadow tall
As a waterfall —
The Negress Dorothy still feels
The great gold planet tease her brain.

And dreaming deep within her blood
Lay Africa like the dark in the wood ;
For Africa is the unhistorical,
Unremembering, unrhetorical,
Undeveloped spirit involved
In the conditions of nature — Man,
That black image of stone hath delved
On the threshold where history began.

Now under the cannibal
Sun is spread
The black rhinoceros-hide of the mud
For endlessness and timelessness . . . dead
Grass creaks like a carrion-bird's voice, rattles,
Squeaks like a wooden shuttle. Battles
Have worn this deserted skeleton black
As empty chain armour . . . lazily back

With only the half of its heart it lies
With the giggling mud devouring its eyes,
Naught left to fight
But the black clotted night
In its heart, and ventriloquist squealing light.

But lying beneath the giggling mud
I thought there was something living, the bray
Of the eyeless mud can not betray —
Though it is buried beneath black bones
Of the fetiches screeching like overtones
Of the light, as they feel the slaves' spilt blood.

In tiers like a box
Beside the docks
The Negro prays,
The Negro knocks.
'Is Anyone there?'
His mumblings tear
Nothing but paper walls, and the blare
Of the gaping capering empty air.
The cannibal drums still roll in the mud
To the bones of the king's mother laved in blood
And the trophies with long black hair, shrunken heads
That drunken, shrunk upon tumbled beds.

The Negro rolls
His red eyeballs,
Prostrates himself.
The Negro sprawls :
His God is but a flat black stone
Upright upon a squeaking bone.

The Negro's dull
Red eyeballs roll . . .
The immortality of the soul
Is but black ghosts that squeak through the hole
That once seemed eyes in Munza's skull.

This is his god :
The cannibal sun
On bones that played
For evermore,
And the dusty roar
Of the ancient Dead,
And the squealing rat,
The soul's ghost fat.

But Lady Bamburgher's Shrunk Head,
Slum hovel, is full of the rat-eaten bones
Of a fashionable god that lived not
Ever, but still has bones to rot :
A bloodless and an unborn thing
That cannot wake, yet cannot sleep,
That makes no sound, that cannot weep,
That hears all, bears all, cannot move —
It is buried so deep
Like a shameful thing
In that plague-spot heart, Death's last dust-heap.

.

A tall house flaps
In the canvas street,
Down in the wineshop
The Amazons meet

With the tall abbess
Of the shade. . . .
A ghost in a gown
Like a stiff brigade

Watches the sailor
With a guitar
Lure the wind
From the islands far.

O far horizons and bright blue wine
And majesty of the seas that shine,

Bull-bellowing waves that ever fall
Round the god-like feet and the goddess tall !

A great yellow flower
With the silence shy
To the wind from the islands
Sighs ' I die.'

At the foot of the steps
Like the navy-blue ghost
Of a coiling Negro,
In dock slums lost,

(The ghost haunting steamers
And cocktail bars,
Card-sharpers, schemers,
And Pullman cars)

A ripple rose
With mud at its root
And weeping kissed
A statue's foot.

In the sailor's tall
Ventriloquist street
The calico dummies
Flap and meet :
Calculate : ' Sally go
Pick up a sailor.'
Behind that façade
The worm is a jailer.

' I cannot stiffen . . . I left my bones
Down in the street : no overtones
Of the murdered light can join my dust
To my black bones pressed in the House of Lust.
Only my feet still walk in the street ;
But where is my heart and its empty beat ?

“ Starved silly Sally, why dilly and dally ? ”
The dummies said when I was a girl.
The rat deserts a room that is bare,
But Want, a cruel rat gnawing there
Ate to the heart, all else was gone,
Nothing remained but Want alone.
So now I’m a gay girl, a calico dummy,
With nothing left alive but my feet
That walk up and down in the Sailor’s Street.

Behind the bawdy hovels like hoardings
Where harridans peer from the grovelling boarding
House, the lunatic
Wind still shakes
My empty rag-body, nothing wakes ;
The wind like a lunatic in a fouled
Nightgown, whipped those rags and howled.

Once I saw it come
Through the canvas slum,
Rattle and beat what seemed a drum,
Rattle and beat it with a bone.
O Christ, that bone was dead, alone.
Christ, who will speak to such ragged Dead
As me, I am dead, alone and bare,
They expose me still to the grinning air,
I shall never gather my bones and my dust
Together (so changed and scattered, lost . . .)
So I can be decently buried !
What is that whimpering like a child
That this mad ghost beats like a drum in the air ?
The heart of Sal
That once was a girl
And now is a calico thing to loll
Over the easy steps of the slum
Waiting for something dead to come.’

From Rotten Alley and Booble Street,
The beggars crawl to starve near the meat

Of the reeling appalling cannibal mart,
And Lady Bamburgher, smart Plague-cart.
Red rag face and a cough that tears
They creep through the mud of the docks from their
 lairs;
And when the dog-whining dawn light
Nosed for their hearts, whined in fright,
With a sly high animal
Whimpering, half-frightened call
To worlds outside our consciousness,
It finds no heart within their dress.
The Rat has eaten
That and beaten
Hope and love and memory,
At last, and even the will to die.
But what is the loss? For you cannot sell
The heart to those that have none for Hell
To fatten on . . . or that cheap machine,
And its beat would make springs for the dancing feet
Of Lady Bamburgher down in the street
Of her dogs that nose out each other's sin,
And grin, and whine, and roll therein.

Against the Sea-wall are painted signs
'Here for a shilling a sailor dines'.
Each Rag-and-Bone
Is propped up tall
(Lest in death it fall)
Against the Sea-wall.
Their empty mouths are sewed up whole
Lest from hunger they gape and cough up their soul.
The arms of one are stretched out wide. . . .
How long, since our Christ was crucified?

Rich man Judas,
Brother Cain,
The rich men are your worms that gain
The air through seething from your brain;

Judas, mouldering in your old
Coffin body, still undying
As the Worm, where you are lying
With no flesh for warmth, but gold
For flesh, for warmth, for sheet :
Now you are fleshless, too, as these
That starve and freeze,
Is your gold hard as Hell's huge polar street,
Is the universal blackness of Hell's day so cold ?

When, creeping over
The Sailor's Street
Where the houses like rat-skin
Masks flap, meet
Never across the murdered bone
Of the sailor, the whining overtone
Of dawn sounds, slaves
Rise from their graves,
Where in the corpse-sheet night they lay
Forgetting the mutilating day,
Like the unborn child in its innocent sleep.
Ah Christ, the murdered light must weep —
(Christ that takest away the sin
Of the world, and the rich man's bone-dead grin)
The light must weep
Seeing that sleep
And those slaves rise up in their death-chains, part
The light from the eyes,
The hands from the heart,
Since their hearts are flesh for the tall
And sprawling
Reeling appalling
Cannibal mart,
But their hands and head
Are machines to breed
Gold for the old and the greedy Dead.

I have seen the murdered God look through the eyes

Of the drunkard's smirched
Mask as he lurched
O'er the half of my heart that lies in the street
'Neath the dancing fleas and the foul news-sheet.

Where (a black gap flapping,
A white skin drum)
The cannibal houses
Watch this come —
Lady Bambergher's party ; for the plan
Is a prize for those that on all fours ran
Through the rotting slum
Till those who come
Could never guess from the mud-covered shapes
Which are the rich or the mired dire apes,
As they run where the souls, dirty paper, are blown
In the hour before dawn, through this long hell of
stone.

Perhaps if I too lie down in the mud,
Beneath tumbrils rolling
And mad skulls galloping
Far from their bunches of nerves that dance
And caper among these slums and prance,
Beneath the noise of that hell that rolls,
I shall forget the shrunken souls,
The eyeless mud squealing ' God is dead,'
Starved men (bags of wind) and the harlot's tread,
The heaven turned into monkey-hide
By Lady Bambergher's dancing fleas,
Her rotting parties and death-slack ease,
And the dead men drunken
(The only tide)
Blown up and down
And tossed through the town
Over the half of my heart that lies
Deep down, in this meaner Death, with cries.

The leaves of black hippopotamus-hide
Black as the mud
Cover the blood
And the rotting world. Do we smell and see

The sick thick smoke from London burning,
Gomorrah turning
Like worms in the grave,
The Bedlam daylight's murderous roar,
Those pillars of fire the drunkard and whore,
Dirty souls boiled in cannibal cookshops to paper
To make into newspapers, flags ? . . . They caper
Like gaping apes. Foul fires we see,
For Bedlam awakes to reality.

The drunkard burning,
The skin drums galloping,
In their long march still parched for the sky,
The Rotten Alleys where beggars groan
And the beggar and his dog share a bone ;
The rich man Cain that hides within
His lumbering palaces where Sin
Through the eyeless holes of Day peers in,
The murdered heart that all night turns
From small machine to shapeless Worm
With hate, and like Gomorrah burns —
These put the eyes of Heaven out,
These raise all Hell's throats to a shout,
These break my heart's walls toppling in,
And like a universal sea
The nations of the Dead crowd in.

Bahunda, Banbangala, Barumbe, Bonge,
And London fall, . . . rolling human skin drums
Surrounded by long black hair, I hear
Their stones that fall,
Their voices that call,
Among the black and the bellowing bones.

But yet when the cannibal
Sun is high
The sightless mud
Weeps tears, a sigh,
To rhinoceros-hided leaves : ‘ Ah why
So sightless, earless, voiceless, I ? ’

The mud has at least its skulls to roll ;
But here as I walk, no voices call,
Only the stones and the bones that fall ;
But yet if only one soul would whine,
Rat-like from the lowest mud, I should know
That somewhere in God’s vast love it would shine :
But even the rat-whine has guttered low.

I saw the Blind like a winding-sheet
Tossed up and down through the blind man’s street
Where the dead plague-spot
Of the spirit’s rot
On the swollen thick houses
Cries to the quick,
Cries to the dark soul that lies there and dies
In hunger and murk, and answers not.

Gomorrhah’s fires have washed my blood —
But the fires of God shall wash the mud
Till the skin drums rolling
The slum cries sprawling
And crawling
Are calling
‘ Burn thou me ! ’
Though Death has taken
And pig-like shaken,
Rooted, and tossed
The rags of me.
Yet the time will come
To the heart’s dark slum

When the rich man's gold and the rich man's wheat
Will grow in the street, that the starved may eat, —
And the sea of the rich will give up its dead —
And the last blood and fire from my side will be shed.
For the fires of God go marching on.

LATER POEMS

1940-1945

PART I



I. Invocation

FOR ALEC AND MERULA GUINNESS

I WHO was once a golden woman like those who walk
In the dark heavens — but am now grown old
And sit by the fire, and see the fire grow cold,
Watch the dark fields for a rebirth of faith and of
wonder.

The turning of Ixion's wheel the day
Ceased not, yet sounds no more the beat of the heart
But only the sound of ultimate Darkness falling
And of the Blind Samson at the Fair, shaking the pillars
of the world and emptily calling.

For the gardeners cried for rain, but the high priests
howled
For a darker rain to cool the delirium of gold
And wash the sore of the world, the heart of Dives,
Raise wheat for the hunger that lies in the soul of the
poor —
Then came the thunderous darkness

And the fly-like whispering of small hopes, small fears,
The gossips of mean Death — gadflies and gnats, the
summer world :
The small and gilded scholars of the Fly
That feed upon the crowds and their dead breath
And buzz and stink where the bright heroes die
Of the dust's rumours and the old world's fevers.
Then fell the world in winter.

But I, a golden woman like the corn goddess
Watch the dark fields, and know when spring begins
To the sound of the heart and the planetary rhythm,
Fires in the heavens and in the hearts of men,
Young people and young flowers come out in the
darkness.

And where are they going? How should I know? I
see only

The hierarchies love the young people — the Swan has
given his snows

And Berenice her wild mane to make their fair hair,
And speaking of love are the voices that come from the
darkness :

Of the nobler love of Man for his brother Man,
And of how the creeds of the world shall no more divide
them

But every life be that of a country Fate
Whose wheel had a golden woof and warp, the Day —
Woven of threads of the common task ; and light
Tells to that little child the humble dust
Tales of the old world's holiness, finds veins of ore
In the unripe wheat-ear ; and the common fire
That drops with seed like the Sun's, is fallen from the
long-leaved planets.

So when the winter of the world and Man's fresh Fall
When democratic Death feared no more the heart's
coldness

Shall be forgotten,
O Love, return to the dying world, as the light
Of morning, shining in all regions, latitudes
And households of high heaven within the heart.

Be then our visible world, our world invisible !
Throughout our day like the laughing flames of the Sun
Lie on our leaves of life, your heat infusing
Deep in the amber blood of the smooth tree.

The panic splendour of the animal
Is yours — O primal Law
That rules the blood — (the solar ray in the veins,
The fire of the hearth, the household Deity
That shines not, nor does it burn, destroy like fire,
But nourishes with its endless wandering
Like that of the Golden Ones in the high heavens.)

Rule then the spirit working in dark earth
As the Sun and Planets rule the husbandman —
O pride that in each semitone
Of amber blood and bone
Proclaims the splendour that arose from the first Dark !

Be too the ear of wheat to the Lost Men
Who ask the city stones if they are bread
And the stones of the city weep. . . . You, the lost days
When all might still be hoped for, and the light
Laid gold in the unhopeful path of the poor —
The shrunken darkness in the miser's heart.

Now falls the night of the world : — O Spirit moving upon
the waters
Your peace instil
In the animal heat and splendour of the blood —
The hot gold of the sun that flames in the night
And knows not down-going
But moves with the revolutions in the heavens.

The thunders and the fires and acclamations
Of the leaves of spring are stilled, but in the night
The Holy Ghost speaks in the whispering leaves.
O wheat-ear shining like a fire and the bright gold,
O water brought from far to the dying gardens !

Bring peace to the famine of the heart and lips,
And to the Last Man's loneliness
Of those who dream they can bring back sight to the blind !

You are the Night
When the long hunt for Nothing is at rest
In the Blind Man's Street, and in the human breast
The hammer of Chaos is stilled.

Be then the sleep
When Judas gives again the childish kiss
That once his mother knew — and wash the stain
From the darkened hands of the universal Cain.

4. *Song for Two Voices*

‘ O DIONYSUS of the tree — you of the beard, you of the
ripeness

Among the branches of my arms and hair
As the boughs of the vine hold the plane-tree —
You came like the wind in the branches.’

‘ And to the earth of my heart, O golden woman
You are the corn-goddess.’

‘ O wind, come again to my branches.’

‘ O darkness of earth — O ripeness.’

PART II



Still Falls the Rain

The Raids, 1940. Night and Dawn

STILL falls the Rain —
Dark as the world of man, black as our loss —
Blind as the nineteen hundred and forty nails
Upon the Cross.

Still falls the Rain
With a sound like the pulse of the heart that is changed to
the hammer-beat
In the Potter's Field, and the sound of the impious feet

On the Tomb :
Still falls the Rain
In the Field of Blood where the small hopes breed and
the human brain
Nurtures its greed, that worm with the brow of Cain.

Still falls the Rain
At the feet of the Starved Man hung upon the Cross.
Christ that each day, each night, nails there, have mercy
on us —
On Dives and on Lazarus :
Under the Rain the sore and the gold are as one.

Still falls the Rain —
Still falls the Blood from the Starved Man's wounded Side :
He bears in His Heart all wounds, — those of the light
that died,

The last faint spark
In the self-murdered heart, the wounds of the sad un-
comprehending dark,
The wounds of the baited bear, —
The blind and weeping bear whom the keepers beat
On his helpless flesh . . . the tears of the hunted hare.

Still falls the Rain —
Then — O Ile leape up to my God : who pulles me
doun —
See, see where Christ's blood streames in the firmament :
It flows from the Brow we nailed upon the tree
Deep to the dying, to the thirsting heart
That holds the fires of the world, — dark-smirched with
pain
As Caesar's laurel crown.

Then sounds the voice of One who like the heart of man
Was once a child who among beasts has lain —
' Still do I love, still shed my innocent light, my Blood,
for thee.'

Lullaby

THOUGH the world has slipped and gone,
Sounds my loud discordant cry
Like the steel birds' song on high :
' Still one thing is left — the Bone ! '
Then out danced the Babioun.

She sat in the hollow of the sea —
A socket whence the eye's put out —
She sang to the child a lullaby
(The steel birds' nest was thereabout).

' Do, do, do, do —
Thy mother's hied to the vaster race :
The Pterodactyl made its nest
And laid a steel egg in her breast —
Under the Judas-coloured sun.
She'll work no more, nor dance, nor moan,
And I am come to take her place.
Do, do.

There's nothing left but earth's low bed —
(The Pterodactyl fouls its nest) :
But steel wings fan thee to thy rest,
And wingless truth and larvae lie
And eyeless hope and handleless fear —
All these for thee as toys are spread,
Do — do —

Red is the bed of Poland, Spain,
And thy mother's breast, who has grown wise
In that fouled nest. If she could rise,
Give birth again,

In wolfish pelt she'd hide thy bones
To shield thee from the world's long cold,

And down on all fours shouldst thou crawl
For thus from no height canst thou fall —
Do, do.

She'd give no hands : there's naught to hold
And naught to make : there's dust to sift,
But no food for the hands to lift.
Do, do.

Heed my ragged lullaby,
Fear not living, fear not chance ;
All is equal — blindness, sight,
There is no depth, there is no height :
Do, do.

The Judas-coloured sun is gone,
And with the Ape thou art alone —
Do,
Do.'

Serenade : Any Man to Any Woman

DARK angel who art clear and straight
As cannon shining in the air,
Your blackness doth invade my mind
And thunderous as the armoured wind
That rained on Europe is your hair ;

And so I love you till I die —
(Unfaithful I, the cannon's mate) :
Forgive my love of such brief span,
But fickle is the flesh of man,
And death's cold puts the passion out.

I'll woo you with a serenade —
The wolfish howls the starving made ;
And lies shall be your canopy
To shield you from the freezing sky.

Yet when I clasp you in my arms —
Who are my sleep, the zero hour
That clothes, instead of flesh, my heart, —
You in my heaven have no part,
For you, my mirage broken in flower,

Can never see what dead men know !
Then die with me and be my love :
The grave shall be your shady grove
And in your pleasaunce rivers flow

(To ripen this new Paradise)
From a more universal Flood
Than Noah knew : but yours is blood.

Yet still you will imperfect be
That in my heart like death's chill grows,
— A rainbow shining in the night,
Born of my tears . . . your lips, the bright
Summer-old folly of the rose.

Street Song

' LOVE my heart for an hour, but my bone for a
At least the skeleton smiles, for it has a morrow
But the hearts of the young are now the dark treasure of
Death,
And summer is lonely.

Comfort the lonely light and the sun in its sorrow,
Come like the night, for terrible is the sun
As truth, and the dying light shows only the skeleton's
hunger
For peace, under the flesh like the summer rose.

Come through the darkness of death, as once through the
branches
Of youth you came, through the shade like the flowering
door
That leads into Paradise, far from the street, — you, the
unborn
City seen by the homeless, the night of the poor.

You walk in the city ways, where Man's threatening
shadow
Red-edged by the sun like Cain, has a changing shape —
Elegant like the Skeleton, crouched like the Tiger,
With the age-old wisdom and aptness of the Ape.

The pulse that beats in the heart is changed to the hammer
That sounds in the Potter's Field where they build a new
world
From our Bone, and the carrion-bird days' foul droppings
and clamour —
But you are my night, and my peace, —

The holy night of conception, of rest, the consoling
Darkness when all men are equal, — the wrong and the
right,

And the rich and the poor are no longer separate nations,
'They are brothers in night.'

This was the song I heard ; but the Bone is silent !
Who knows if the sound was that of the dead light call-
ing, —
Of Caesar rolling onward his heart, that stone,
Or the burden of Atlas falling.

O yet forgive

O YET forgive my heart in your long night !
I am too poor to be Death's self so I might lie
Upon your heart . . . for my mortality
Too sad and heavy is, would leave a stain
Upon young lips, young eyes. . . . You will not
come again :

So the weight of Atlas' woe, changed to a stone,
And that stone is my heart, I laid above
Your eyes, till blind as love
You no more see the work of the old wise.

But you in your long night are not deceived :
And so, not heeding the world, you let it roll
Into the long abyss
And say, ' What is that sound ? I am alone. . . .
Is it my great sunrise ? '

Poor Young Simpleton

I. An Old Song Re-sung

‘ ONCE my love seemed the Burning Bush,
The Pentecost Rushing of Flames :
Now the Speech has fallen to the chatter of alleys
Where fallen man and the rising ape
And the howling Dark play games.

For she leaned from the light like the Queen of Fairies
Out of the bush of the yellow broom . . .
“ I’ll take out that heart of yours,” she said,
“ And put in your breast a stone.
O, I’ll leave an empty room,” she said,
“ A fouled, but an empty room.” ’

II

‘ I WALKED with my dead living love in the city —
The Potter’s Field where the race of Man
Constructs a new world with hands thumbless from unuse
— (Pads like a tiger’s) — a skeleton plan.

We walked in the city where even the lightning —
The Flag of Blood flying across the world,
The Flag of immeasurable Doom, of God’s warning,
Is changed to a spider’s universe, furred

For a banner of hunger . . . the world of the thunder
Is dulled till it seems but the idiot drum
Of a universe changed to a circus, — the clatter
Where the paralysed dance in the blind man’s slum.

But the sun was huge as a mountain of diamonds
That starved men see on a plain far away :
It will never buy food, but its red fires glittered
On the Heart of Quietness, my Eden day.

For she was the cool of the evening, bringing
The dead child home to the mother's breast,
The wanderer homeward, far from the hammer
That beats in the Potter's Field : she was my rest,

And the Burning Bush, and the worker's Sunday,
The neighbour of Silence, speech to the still,
And her kiss was the Fiery Chariot, low swinging
To take me over the diamond hill.

Where the crowds sweep onward, mountaineers, nomads
From cities and continents man has not seen,
With beachcombers drifted from shores that no wave has
known,
Pilgrims to shrines where no God-head has been,

We watched the somnambulists, rope-walkers, argonauts,
Avatars, tamers of steel-birds and fugitives
From dream and reality, emigrants, mourners,
And each with his Shadow, to prove that Man lives !

And with them come gaps into listening Darkness :
The gun-men, the molochs, the matadors, man-eaters,
Hiding in islands of loneliness, each one
Infections of hatred, and greed-plague, and fear.

For the season of red pyromaniacs, the dog-days
Are here, and now even the sun of a kiss
Sets a city on fire, and the innocent roses
Are the fever of foolish world-summers ; and this

Beloved of my skeleton laughed, and said, " Tell me —
Why give me your heart like an eagle that flies,
Or a sun ? — You should give me a crow for my dinner,
Or a flat dirty penny to lay on my eyes."

And how can I save the heart of my Eden
That is only the hammering heart of the town,

When the only world left is my skeleton's city
Where the sun of the desert will never go down ?

She has hearkened the Spider's prudence, the wisdom
That, spinning a foul architecture, unfurled
From his belly a city he made out of Hunger —
Constructed for Hunger's need : his is the world.

So what can I give to her ? Civilisation's
Disease, a delirium flushed like the rose
And noisy as summer ? Hands thumbless from unuse
— (From pads like a tiger's what bright claw grows ?)

Though faithless the rose and the flesh, yet the city,
That eternal landscape, the skeleton's plan,
Has hope for its worm. . . . I will give her the pity
For the fallen Ape, of the Tiger, Man.

For my Eden is withered. I, damned by the Rainbow,
Near that fouled trodden alley, the bed where she lies,
Can wake no false dawn, — where, for want of a penny,
She lies with the sins of the world on her eyes.'

Song

ONCE my heart was a summer rose
That cares not for right or wrong,
And the sun was another rose, that year,
They shone, the sun and the rose, my dear —
Over the long and the light summer land
All the bright summer long.

As I walked in the long and the light summer land
All that I knew of shade
Was the cloud, my ombrelle of rustling grey
Sharp silk, it had spokes of grey steel rain —
Hiding my rose away, my dear,
Hiding my rose away.

And my laughter shone like a flight of birds
All in the summer gay, —
Tumbling pigeons and chattering starlings
And other pretty darlings, my dear,
And other pretty darlings.

To my heart like a rose, a rain of tears
(All the bright summer long)
Was only the sheen on a wood-dove's breast,
And sorrow only her song, my love —
And sorrow only my rest.

I passed a while in Feather Town —
(All the bright summer long) —
The idle wind puffed that town up
In air, then blew it down.

I walk alone now in Lead Town
(All in the summer gay . . .)
Where the steady people walk like the Dead —
And will not look my way.

For withering my heart, that summer rose,
Came another heart like a sun, —
And it drank all the dew from the rose, my love,
And the birds have forgotten their song
That sounded all summer long, my dear —
All the bright summer long.

Green Flows the River of Lethe—O

GREEN flows the river of Lethe — O
Long Lethe river
Where the fire was in the veins — and grass is growing
Over the fever —
The green grass growing. . . .

I stood near the Cities of the Plains
And the young girls were chasing their hearts like the gay
butterflies
Over the fields of summer —
O evanescent velvets fluttering your wings
Like winds and butterflies on the Road from Nothing to
Nowhere !

But in the summer drought
I fled, for I was a Pillar of Fire, I was Destruction
Unquenched, incarnate and incarnadine.

I was Annihilation
Yet white as the Dead Sea, white as the Cities of the Plains.
For I listened to the noontide and my veins
That threatened thunder and the heart of roses.

I went the way I would —
But long is the terrible Street of the Blood
That had once seemed only part of the summer redness :
It stretches for ever, and there is no turning
But only fire, annihilation, burning.

I thought the way of the Blood would never tire
But now only the red clover
Lies over the breath of the lion and the mouth of the
lover —

And green flows Lethe river — O
Long Lethe river
Over Gomorrah's city and the fire. . . .

A Mother to her Dead Child

THE winter, the animal sleep of the earth is over
And in the warmth of the affirming sun
All beings, beasts, men, planets, waters, move
Freed from the imprisoning frost, acclaim their love
That is the light of the sun.

So the first spring began
Within the heart before the Fall of Man.

The earth puts forth its sprays, the heart its warmth,
And your hands push back the dark that is your nurse,
Feel for my heart as in the days before your birth.
O Sun of my life, return to the waiting earth
Of your mother's breast, the heart, the empty arms.
Come soon, for the time is passing, and when I am old
The night of my body will be too thick and cold
For the sun of your growing heart. Return from your
new mother

The earth : she is too old for your little body,
Too old for the small tendernesses, the kissings
In the soft tendrils of your hair. The earth is so old
She can only think of darkness and sleep, forgetting
That children are restless like the small spring shadows.
But the huge pangs of winter and the pain
Of the spring's birth, the endless centuries of rain
Will not lay bare your trusting smile, your tress,
Or lay your heart bare to my heart again
In your small earthly dress.

And when I wait for you upon the summer roads
They bear all things and men, business and pleasure,
sorrow,
And lovers' meetings, mourning shades, the poor man's
leisure,
And the foolish rose that cares not ever for the far
tomorrow.

But the roads are too busy for the sound of your feet,
And the lost men, the rejected of life, who tend the wounds

That life has made as if they were a new sunrise, whose
human speech is dying
From want, to the rusted voice of the tiger, turn not their
heads lest I hear your child-voice crying
In that hoarse tiger-voice : ' I am hungry ! am cold ! '
Lest I see your smile upon lips that were made for the kiss
that exists not,
The food that deserts them, — those lips never warm with
love, but from the world's fever,
Whose smile is a gap into darkness, the breaking apart
Of the long-impending earthquake that waits in the heart.
That smile rends the soul with the sign of its destitution,
It drips from the last long pangs of the heart, self-devouring,
And tearing the seer.

Yet one will return to the lost men,
Whose heart is the Sun of Reason, dispelling the shadow
That was born with no eyes to shed tears, — bringing peace
to the lust
And pruriency of the Ape, from the human heart's sublimity
And tenderness teaching the dust that it is holy,
And to those who are hungry, are naked and cold as the
worm, who are bare as the spirit
In that last night when the rich and the poor are alone,
Bringing love like the daily bread, like the light at morning.
And knowing this, I would give you again, my day's darling,
My little child who preferred the bright apple to gold,
And who lies with the shining world on his innocent eyes,
Though night-long I feel your tears, bright as the rose
In its sorrowful leaves, on my lips, and feel your hands
Touching my cheek, and wondering ' Are those your tears ? '
O grief, that your heart should know the tears that seem
empty years
And the worlds that are falling !

Tattered Serenade : Beggar to Shadow

TO ROBERT HERRING

I

THESE are the nations of the Dead, their million-year-old
Rags about them, — these, the eternally cold,
Misery's worlds, with Hunger, their long sun
Shut in by polar worlds of ice, known to no other,
Without a name, without a brother,
Though their skin shows that they yet are men,

Airing their skeletons' well-planned cities whence
(Left by the rose, the flesh, with truth alone),
The fevers of the world and of the heart,
The light of the sun, are gone.

And to their only friend, the Shade
They cast, their muttering voices sing this Serenade :

' O Shade ! Gigantic and adaptable Ape,
With the elegance of the skeleton
In your black tattered cape —
How like, and yet how unlike, you are to our last state !

You, too, have giant hands, — but have no thumbs
In a world where nothing is to make or hold,
Nor have you that appalling gulf the heart, —
Or that red gulf the gullet where only Hunger comes.

For face, you have a hollow wolf-grey cowl
Like mine . . . no voice to howl —

(O plain of winter wolves beneath my heart !)
And no identity ! No face to weep !
No bed — unlike the rich men who can creep
Into the pocks made by that vast disease
That is our civilisation, once there, lie at ease !

No memory, — no years,
Nothing to feel or think,
No friend from whom to part with youthful tears.
But your unutterable tatters cannot stink !

My overcoat, like yours, is an Ideal,
With a gulf for pockets — nothing there to steal
But my empty hands, that long have lost their use,
With nothing now to make, or hold, or lose.

Yet when spring comes, a world is in my head,
And dreams, for those who never have a bed —

The thought of a day when all may be possible, — all
May come my way,' said small Rag-Castle to Rag-Castle
tall, —

The young, that have no covering between
Their outer tatters and the worthless skin
That shows the air, the rain, they yet are men,

When remembering it is spring, falls the warm rain
Like lilies of the vale,
Buds golden-pale
Sprouting from pavements, or a universe of coins, endless
gold

Pelting the homeless, those who have no dress
Against the winter cold,
But the skeleton, that burgh of idleness
Where only the worm works . . . those that are alone
Except for hunger, thirst, and lust ;
For the fevers of the world and of the heart,
The summer rose, are gone.

II

In the summer, when no one is cold,
And the country roads seem of hot gold,

While the air seems a draught of white wine
Where all day long golden stars shine, —

And the sun is a world of red meat
For those who have nothing to eat,

I walk the world, envying the roads
That have somewhere to go, that bear loads

Of happiness, business, and sorrow,
And the rose that cares not for tomorrow ;

But I've nothing to hold or to lose,
And my hands have long since lost their use ;

While my overcoat's but an Ideal, —
In my pockets there's nothing to steal.

But the roads have north, east, west, and south,
For their food, though I've none for my mouth

Or my empty red gulf of a heart —
I have no friend from whom I must part

But the shade that I cast, — my one friend
Till at last the world comes to an end.

His face is a wolfish grey cowl,
Like my own, but without the wolf's howl,

For like me, he's a face, but no tears
He can shed, neither memory nor years.

But the Shadow has never known cold,
And the Shadow will never grow old, —

The black tatters he wears cannot stink
And he neither can feel, fear, or think,

While a universe grows in my head, —
I have dreams, though I have not a bed —

✓
The thought of a world and a day
When all may be possible, still come my way

As I walk the long roads of hot gold
In the summer, when no one is cold.)

A Song of the Cold

TO NATASHA LITVIN

HUGE is the sun of amethysts and rubies,
And in the purple perfumes of the polar sun
And homeless cold they wander.
But winter is the time for comfort, and for friendship,
For warmth and food —
And a talk beside a fire like the Midnight Sun, —
A glowing heart of amber and of musk. Time to forget
The falling night of the world and heart, the polar
chaos
That separates us each from each. It is no time to roam
Along the pavements wide and cold as Hell's huge polar
street,
Drifting along the city like the wind
Blowing aimlessly, and with no home
To rest in, only famine for a heart —
While Time means nothing to one, as to the wind
Who only cares for ending and beginning.

Here in the fashionable quarters of the city
Cold as the universal blackness of Hell's day
The two opposing brotherhoods are swept
Down the black marble pavements, Lethe's river.
First come the worlds of Misery, the small and tall Rag-
Castles,
Shut off from every other. These have no name,
Nor friend to utter it . . . these of the extinct faces
Are a lost civilisation, and have no possession
But the night and day, those centuries of cold.
Even their tears are changed now to the old
Eternal nights of ice round the loveless head
Of these who are lone and sexless as the Dead.
Dives of the Paleocrystic heart, behold
These who were once your brothers! Hear their voices
Hoarsened by want to the rusty voice of the tiger, no
more crying

The death of the soul, but lamenting their destitution.
What life, what solar system of the heart
Could bring a restitution
To these who die of the cold ?

Some keep their youthful graces,
Yet in their winding-sheets of rags seem early
Made ready for the grave. . . . Worn to the bone by
their famine

As if by the lusts that the poor Dead have known,
Who now are cold for ever. . . . Those who are old
Seem humbler, lean their mouths to the earth as if to
crop

The kind earth's growth — for this is the Cainozoic period
When we must learn to walk with the gait of the Ape and
Tiger :

The warmth of the heart is dead, or has changed to the
world's fever —

And love is but masked murder, the lust for possession,
The hunger of the Ape, or the confession
Of the last fear, the wish to multiply
Their image, of a race on Oblivion's brink.

Lazarus, weep for those who have known the lesser
deaths, O think

How we should pity the High Priests of the god of this
world, the saints of Mammon,

The cult of gold ! For see how these, too, ache with the
cold

From the polar wastes of the heart. . . . See all they
have given

Their god ! Are not their veins grown ivy-old,
And have they not eaten their own hearts and lives in
their famine ?

Their huge Arithmetic is but the endless
Repetition of Zero — the unlimited,
Eternal. — Even the beat of the heart and the pulse is
changed to this :

The counting of small deaths, the repetition
Of Nothing, endless positing and suppression of
Nothing. . . . So they live
And die of inanition. . . .

The miser Foscue

Weaving his own death and sinking like a spider
To vaults and depths that held his gold, that sun,
Was walled in that grave by the rotting hand of the dust,
by a trap-door falling.
Do the enormous rays of that Sun now warm his blood,
the appalling
Empty gulf of his veins — or fertilise
His flesh, that continent of dryness ? . . . Yellow, cold,
And crumbling as his gold,
Deserted by the god of this world, a Gold Man like a
terrible Sun,
A Mummy with a Lion's mane
He sits in this desert where no sound of wave shall come,
And Time's sands are of gold, filling his ears and eyes ;
And he who has grown the talons of the Lion
Has devoured the flesh of his own hands and heart in his pain.

Pity these hopeless acolytes . . . the vain
Prudence that emulates the wisdom of the Spider
Who spins but for herself — a world of Hunger
Constructed for the needs of Hunger. . . . Soon
Their blankets will be thinner than her thread :
When comes the Night when they have only gold
For flesh, for warmth, for sheet —
O who would not pity these,
Grown fleshless too as those who starve and freeze !

Now falls the Night on Lazarus and Dives —
Those who were brothers, those who shared the pain
Of birth, and lusts, and the daily lesser deaths,
The beat of the dying heart, the careful breaths :
' You are so worn to the bone, I thought you were
Death, my brother —

Death who will warm my heart.' 'Have you too known
the cold ?

Give me your hand to warm me. I am no more alone.

There was a sun that shone

On all alike, but the cold in the heart of Man

Has slain it. Where is it gone ?'

So in the great Night that comes like love, so small they
lie

As when they lay close to their mother's breast,

Naked and bare in their mortality.

Soon comes the Night when those who were never loved

Shall know the small immortal serpent's kiss

And turn to dust as lover turns to lover. . . .

Than all shall know the cold's equality. . . .

Young Beauty, bright as the tips of the budding vine,

You with the gold Appearances from Nothing rise

In the spring wind, and but for a moment shine.

Dust are the temples that were bright as heat . . .

And, perfumed nosegay brought for noseless Death,

Your brightest myrrh can not perfume his breath !

That old rag-picker blown along the street

Was once great Venus. But now Age unkind

Has shrunk her so feeble and so small —

Weak as a babe. And she who gave the Lion's kiss

Has now all Time's gap for her piteous mouth.

What lullaby will Death sing, seeing this

Small babe ? And she of the golden feet,

To what love does she haste ? After these centuries

The sun will be her only kiss — now she is blackened,

shrunk, old

As the small worm — her kiss, like his, grown cold.

In the nights of spring, the inner leaf of the heart

Feels warm, and we will pray for the eternal cold

Of those who are only warmed by the sins of the world —

And those whose nights were violent like the buds
And roots of spring, but like the spring, grew old.
Their hearts are tombs on the heroic shore,
That were of iris, diamond, hyacinth,
And now are patterned only by Time's wave . . . the
 glittering plinth
Is crumbling. . . . But the great sins and fires break out
 of me
Like the terrible leaves from the bough in the violent
 spring . . .
I am a walking fire, I am all leaves —
I will cry to the Spring to give me the birds' and the
 serpents' speech
That I may weep for those who die of the cold —
The ultimate cold within the heart of Man.

Tears

My tears were Orion's splendour with sextuple suns and
the million

Flowers in the fields of the heaven, where solar systems
are setting —

The rocks of great diamonds in the midst of the clear
wave

By May dews and early light ripened, more diamonds
begetting.

I wept for the glories of air, for the millions of dawns
And the splendours within Man's heart with the darkness
warring,

I wept for the beautiful queens of the world, like a
flower-bed shining, —

Now gathered, some at six, some at seven, but all in
Eternity's morning.

But now my tears have shrunk and like hours are falling :

I weep for Venus whose body has changed to a meta-
physical city

Whose heart-beat is now the sound of the revolutions, —
for love changed

To the hospital mercy, the scientists' hope for the future,

And for darkened Man, that complex multiplicity

Of air and water, plant and animal,

Hard diamond, infinite sun.

PART III



Heart and Mind

SAID the Lion to the Lioness — ‘ When you are amber
dust, —

No more a raging fire like the heat of the Sun
(No liking but all lust) —

Remember still the flowering of the amber blood and bone
The rippling of bright muscles like a sea,
Remember the rose-prickles of bright paws
Though we shall mate no more
Till the fire of that sun the heart and the moon-cold bone
are one.’

Said the Skeleton lying upon the sands of Time —
‘ The great gold planet that is the mourning heat of the Sun
Is greater than all gold, more powerful
Than the tawny body of a Lion that fire consumes
Like all that grows or leaps . . . so is the heart
More powerful than all dust. Once I was Hercules
Or Samson, strong as the pillars of the seas :
But the flames of the heart consumed me, and the mind
Is but a foolish wind.’

Said the Sun to the Moon — ‘ When you are but a lonely
white crone,
And I, a dead King in my golden armour somewhere in a
dark wood,
Remember only this of our hopeless love
That never till Time is done
Will the fire of the heart and the fire of the mind be one.’

Green Song

TO DAVID HORNER

AFTER the long and portentous eclipse of the patient sun
The sudden spring began
With the bird-sounds of Doom in the egg, and Fate in
the bud that is flushed with the world's fever —
But those bird-songs have trivial voices and sound not
like thunder,
And the sound when the bud bursts is no more the sound
of the worlds that are breaking.—
But the youth of the world, the lovers, said, 'It is Spring!
And we who were black with the winter's shade, and old,
See the emeralds are awake upon the branches
And grasses, bird-blood leaps within our veins
And is changed to emeralds like the sap in the grasses.
The beast-philosopher hiding in the orchards,
Who had grown silent from the world's long cold
Will tell us the secret of how Spring began
In the young world before the Fall of Man.
For you are the young spring earth
And I, O Love, your dark and lowering heaven.'

But an envious ghost in the spring world
Sang to them a shrunken song
Of the world's right and wrong —
Whispered to them through the leaves, 'I wear
The world's cold for a coat of mail
Over my body bare —
I have no heart to shield my bone
But with the world's cold am alone —
And soon your heart, too, will be gone —
My day's darling.'

The naked Knight in the coat of mail
Shrieked like a bird that flies through the leaves —
The dark bird proud as the Prince of the Air,
'I am the world's last love. . . . Beware —

Young girl, you press your lips to lips
That are already cold —
For even the bright earthly dress
Shall prove, at last, unfaithfulness.

His country's love will steal his heart —
To you it will turn cold
When foreign earth lies on the breast
Where your young heart was wont to rest
Like leaves upon young leaves, when warm was the green
spray,
And warm was the heart of youth, my day's darling.

And if that ghost return to you —
(The dead disguised as a living man)
Then I will come like Poverty
And wear your face, and give your kiss,
And shrink the world, and that sun the heart
Down to a penny's span :

For there is a sound you heard in youth,
A flower whose light is lost —
There is a faith and a delight —
They lie at last beneath my frost
When I am come like Time that all men, faiths, loves,
suns defeat,
My frost despoils the day's young darling.

For the young heart like the spring wind grows cold
And the dust, the shining racer, is overtaking
The laughing young people who are running like fillies,
The golden ladies and the ragpickers
And the foolish companions of spring, the wild wood
lilies.'

But the youth of the world said, ' Give me your golden
hand
That is but earth, yet it holds the lands of heaven

And you are the sound of the growth of spring in the
heart's deep core,
The hawthorn-blossoming boughs of the stars and the
young orchards' emerald lore.'

And hearing that, the poor ghost fled like the winter
rain —
Sank into greenish dust like the fallen moon
Or the sweet green dust of the lime-flowers that will be
blossoming soon —
And spring grew warm again —

No more the accusing light, revealing the rankness of
Nature,
All motives and desires and lack of desire
In the human heart, but loving all life, it comes to bless
Immortal things in their poor earthly dress —
The blind of life beneath the frost of their great winter
And those for whom the winter breaks in flower
And summer grows from a long-shadowed kiss.
And Love is the vernal equinox in the veins
When the sun crosses the marrow and pith of the heart
Among the viridian smells, the green rejoicing.
All names, sounds, faiths, delights, and duties lost
Return to the hearts of men, those households of high
heaven.

And voices speak in the woods as from a nest
Of leaves — they sing of rest,
And love, and toil, the rhythms of their lives,
Singing how winter's dark was overcome,
And making plans for tomorrow as though yesterday
Had never been, nor the lonely ghost's old sorrow,
And Time seemed but the beat of heart to heart,
And Death the pain of earth turning to spring again
When lovers meet after the winter rain.
And when we are gone, they will see in the great
mornings
Born of our lives, some memory of us, the golden stalk

Of the young long-petalled flower of the sun in the pale
air

Among the dew. . . . Are we not all of the same substance,
Men, planets and earth, born from the heart of darkness,
Returning to darkness, the consoling mother,
For the short winter sleep — O my calyx of the flower of
the world, you the spirit
Moving upon the waters, the light on the breast of the
dove.

Anne Boleyn's Song

FOR MINNIE ASTOR

' AFTER the terrible rain, the Annunciation ' —
The bird-blood in the veins that has changed to emeralds
Answered the bird-call. . . .
In the neoteric Spring the winter coldness
Will be forgotten
As I forget the coldness of my last lover,

The great grey King
Who lies upon my breast
And rules the bird-blood in my veins that shrieked with
 laughter
— A sound like fear —
When my step light and high
Spurned my sun down from the sky
In my heedless headless dance —
O many a year ago, my dear,
My living lass !

In the nights of Spring, the bird, the Angel of the
 Annunciation
Broods over his heaven of wings and of green wild-fire
That each in its own world, each in its egg
Like Fate is lying.

He sang to my blood, as Henry, my first King,
My terrible sun
Came like the Ethos of Spring, the first green streak,
And to me cried,
' Your veins are the branches where the first blossom begins
After the winter rains —
Your eyes are black and deep
As the prenatal sleep
And your arms and your breasts are my Rivers of Life
While a new world grows in your side.'

Men said I was the primal Fall,
That I gave him the world of spring and of youth like an
apple
And the orchards' emerald lore —
And sin lay at the core.

But Henry thought me winter-cold
When to keep his love I turned from him as the world
Turns from the sun . . . and then the world grew old —

But I who grew in the heart as the bird-song
Grows in the heart of Spring . . . I, terrible Angel
Of the emeralds in the blood of man and tree,
How could I know how cold the nights of Spring would
be

When my grey glittering King —
Old amorous Death grew acclimatised to my coldness :
His age sleeps on my breast,
My veins, like branches where the first peach-blossom
Trembles, bring the Spring's warmth to his greyness.

A Young Girl

Is it the light of the snow that soon will be overcoming
The spring of the world? Ah no, the light is the white-
ness of all the wings of the angels
As pure as the lily born with the white sun.
And I would that each hair on my head was an angel,
O my red Adam,
And my neck could stretch to you like a sunbeam or the
young shoot of a lily
In the first spring of the world, till you, my grandeur of
clay,
My Adam, red loam of the orchard, forgetting
The thunders of wrongs and of rights and of ruins
Would find the green shadow of spring beneath the hairs
of my head, those bright angels,
And my face, the white sun that is born of the stalk of a
lily
Come back from the underworld, bringing light to the
lonely :
Till the people in islands of loneliness cry to the other
islands
Forgetting the wars of men and of angels, the new Fall of
Man.

How Many Heavens . . .

THE emeralds are singing on the grasses
And in the trees the bells of the long cold are ringing, —
My blood seems changed to emeralds like the spears
Of grass beneath the earth piercing and singing.

The flame of the first blade
Is an angel piercing through the earth to sing
' God is everything !
The grass within the grass, the angel in the angel, flame
Within the flame, and He is the green shade that came
To be the heart of shade.'

The grey-beard angel of the stone,
Who has grown wise with age, cried ' Not alone
Am I within my silence, — God is the stone in the still
stone, the silence laid
In the heart of silence ' . . . then, above the glade

The yellow straws of light
Whereof the sun has built his nest, cry ' Bright
Is the world, the yellow straw
My brother, — God is the straw within the straw : —
All things are Light.'

He is the sea of ripeness and the sweet apple's emerald
lore.
So you, my flame of grass, my root of the world from
which all Spring shall grow,
O you, my hawthorn bough of the stars, now leaning low
Through the day, for your flowers to kiss my lips, shall
know
He is the core of the heart of love, and He, beyond
labouring seas, our ultimate shore.

The Flowering Forest

THEY walked in the green wood, wild snows, soft,
 unchilling,
Falling upon their hair, touching their lips
In the undying ways, in the bright April land.
' See, Aldebaran, wild Cassiopeia
And Sirius are jealous of your white hand, —
Orion with sextuple suns and great nebulae
Procyon and Vega and Altair, the parallax
Trail of the fixed stars are falling to greet you.
While the planetary systems and snows on the branches
Are shaking with laughter at seeing the old
World's follies that dream that the heart will grow cold.
And the drops of dew fall'n from the branches and white
 flowers,
Are young worlds that run to each other, their beings
Are one, in the green ways, the bright April land.'

Holiday

O you, all life, and you, the primal Cause —
The Sun and Planets to the husbandman,
The kernel and the sap, the life-blood, flower
Of all that lives, the Power
That holds the Golden Rainers in the heaven,

The wasteful Gardener Who to grow one flower —
Your life, like a long-petalled Sun, has strewn the infinite
Meadow of space with calyxes that die
Like dew, has sown the seed of this hour that comes no
more —

Growing in Time, too thin as an abstraction
Yet holding in the end our bones like winter.

Come, we will leave the grey life, the half light
Where we are like the blind, live but in Time
When Toil, the arithmetician, rules the beat
Of blood and heart.

Beneath the flowering boughs of heaven
The country roads are made of thickest gold —
They stretch beyond the world, and light like snow
Falls where we go, the Intelligible Light
Turns all to gold, the apple, the dust, the unripe wheat-ear.
Young winds and people have winged feet like Mercury,
And distance is dead, the world ends in the heart.

On this great holiday
Dives and Lazarus are brothers again :
They seem of gold as they come up from the city
Casting aside the grave-clothes of their lives
Where the ragged dust is nobly born as the Sun.
Now Atlas lays aside his dying world,
The clerk, the papers in the dusty office ;
And lovers meet their bright Antipodes
To whom they are borne by the young siren seas
Of blood . . . he finds no more his dark night is her noon,

For they forget their minds' polarity,
The jarring atoms. . . . The least ore of gold
And quality of dust
Holds a vein of holiness . . . the laws that lie
In the irrefutable dust are Fate's decrees.
No more is Man
The noonday hope of the worm that is his brother —
He who begins with the shape of that eyeless one
Then changes to the world in the mother's side :
For the heart of Man is yet unwearied by Chaos,
And the hands grown thumbless from unuse, the work-
less hands
Where the needs of famine have grown the claws of the
lion
Bear now on their palms the wounds of the Crucified.

For now the unborn God in the human heart
Knows for a moment all sublimities. . . .
Old people at evening sitting in the doorways
See in a broken window of the slum
The Burning Bush reflected, and the crumb
For the starving bird is part of the broken Body
Of Christ Who forgives us — He with the bright Hair
— The Sun Whose Body was spilt on our fields to bring
us harvest.

Song

WE are the darkness in the heat of the day,
The rootless flowers in the air, the coolness : we are the
water

Lying upon the leaves before Death, our sun,
And its vast heat has drunken us . . . Beauty's daughter
The heart of the rose and we are one.

We are the summer's children, the breath of evening, the
days

When all may be hoped for, — we are the unreturning
Smile of the lost one, seen through the summer leaves —
That sun and its false light scorning.

The Youth with the Red-Gold Hair

THE gold-armoured ghost from the Roman road
Sighed over the wheat
‘ Fear not the sound and the glamour
Of my gold armour —
(The sound of the wind and the wheat)
Fear not its clamour. . . .
Fear only the red-gold sun with the fleece of a fox
Who will steal the fluttering bird you hide in your breast.
Fear only the red-gold rain
That will dim your brightness, O my tall tower of the
corn,
You, — my blonde girl. . . .’
But the wind sighed ‘ Rest.’ . . .
The wind in his grey knight’s armour
The wind in his grey night armour
Sighed over the fields of the wheat, ‘ He is gone. . . .
Forlorn.’

Girl and Butterfly

I, AN old man,
Bent like Ixion on my broken wheel the world,
Stare at the dust and scan
What has been made of it . . . and my companion

Shadow, born with a wolfish pelt —
Grey dress to wear against the invincible cold
Sits at my feet. . . . We scan the old
And young, we stare at the old woman
Who bears a stone in her breast
That will not let her rest
Because it once was a world in the grey dawn
When sap and blood were one.

We stare at the young girl chasing a yellow butterfly
On the summer roads that lead from Nothing to Nowhere.

What golden racers, young winds, have gone ! For the
dust like a great wave
Breaks over them — the shade of mortality lying
On the golden hand (the calyx outshining all flowers) —
The hand that drew the chart of the undiscovered,
And the smile for which great golden heroes marched
with the pride
And pomp of waves — and like the waves they died.
The words that drew from the shade
A planetary system :

These are gone —

And the Grey Man that waits on the Road from Nothing
to Nowhere
Does not care how the breezes and butterflies move their
four wings —
And now the old woman who once was a world and my
earth,
Lies like time upon my heart, or a drift of the grey dust.

But the young girl chases the yellow butterfly
Happiness . . . what is the dust that lies on its wings ?
Is it from far away
From the distance that lies between lover and lover, their
 minds never meeting —
Like the bright continents ? — are Asia, Africa, and
 Cathay
But golden flowers that shine in the fields of summer —
As quickly dying ?

Song

THE Queen Bee sighed, 'How heavy is my sweet gold !'
To the wind in the honey-hive.

And sighed the old King, 'The weight of my crown is
cold —

And laden is life !'

'How heavy,' sighed the gold heart of the day, 'is the
heat !'

Ah, not so laden sweet

As my heart with its infinite gold and its weight of love.

The Poet Laments the Coming of Old Age

I SEE the children running out of school ;
They are taught that Goodness means a blinding hood
Or is heaped by Time like the hump on an aged back,
And that Evil can be cast like an old rag
And Wisdom caught like a hare and held in the golden
sack
Of the heart. . . . But I am one who must bring back
sight to the blind.

Yet there was a planet dancing in my mind
With a gold seed of Folly . . . long ago. . . .
And where is that grain of Folly ? . . . with the hare-
wild wind
Of my spring it has gone from one who must bring back
sight to the blind.

For I, the fool, was once like the philosopher
Sun who laughs at evil and at good :
I saw great things mirrored in littleness,
Who now see only that great Venus wears Time's filthy
dress —
A toothless crone who once had the Lion's mouth.

The Gold Appearances from Nothing rise
In sleep, by day . . . two thousand years ago
There was a man who had the Lion's leap,
Like the Sun's, to take the worlds and loves he would,
But (laughed the philosopher Sun, and I, the fool)

Great golden Alexander and his thunder-store
Are now no more
Than the armoured knight who buzzed on the window-
pane
And the first drops of rain.

He lies in sleep. . . . But still beneath a thatch
Of hair like sunburnt grass, the thieving sweet thoughts
 move
Toward the honey-hive. . . . And another sweet-tooth
 Alexander runs
Out of the giant shade that is his school,
To take the dark knight's world, the honeycomb.

The Sun's simulacrum, the gold-sinewed man
Lies under a hump of grass, as once I thought to wear
With patience, Goodness like a hump on my aged back.
. . . But Goodness grew not with age, although my heart
 must bear
The weight of all Time's filth, and Wisdom is not a hare
 in the golden sack

Of the heart. . . . It can never be caught. Though I
 bring back sight to the blind
My seed of Folly has gone, that could teach me to bear
That the gold-sinewed body that had the blood of all the
 earth in its veins
Has changed to an old rag of the outworn world
And the great heart that the first Morning made
Should wear all Time's destruction for a dress.

' O bitter love, O Death . . . '

I DREW a stalk of dry grass through my lips
And heard it sigh
' Once I was golden Helen . . . but am now a thin
Dry stalk of quaking grass. . . . What wind, what Paris
now would win
My love ? — for I am drier than a crone.'

But the sap in those dry veins sang like a bird :
' I was the sea that knew the siren song
And my veins heard
A planet singing in the Dorian mode !'

An old man weary with rolling wisdom like a stone
Up endless hills to lay on the innocent eyes
Said, ' Once I was Plato, wise
In the ripe and unripe weathers of the mind,
And I could draw

The maps of worlds beyond the countries of the blind
Sense ; I found the law
Uniting atoms of our Chaos like the love
Of boy and girl.'

Another old man said
' I was a great gold-sinewed King, I had a lion's mane
Like the raging Sun . . . but now I am alone —
And my love, that white lady, is but a thin white bone.

I live in my perpendicular grey house
Then in my horizontal house — a foolish bed
For one whose blood like Alexander roamed
Conquering the countries of the heart.

All is the same :
The heroes marched like waves upon the shore :

Their great horizons, and the kiss
Of lovers, and of atoms, end in this.'

O bitter love, O Death that came
To steal all that I own !

Most Lovely Shade

FOR ALICE BOUVERIE

Most lovely Dark, my Æthiopia born
Of the shade's richest splendour, leave not me
Where in the pomp and splendour of the shade
The dark air's leafy plumes no more a lulling music
made.

Dark is your fleece, and dark the airs that grew
Amid those weeping leaves.
Plantations of the East drop precious dew
That, ripened by the light, rich leaves perspire.
Such are the drops that from the dark airs' feathers
flew.

Most lovely Shade . . . Syrinx and Dryope
And that smooth nymph that changed into a tree
Are dead . . . the shade, that Æthiopia, sees
Their beauty make more bright its treasures —
Their amber blood in porphyry veins still grows
Deep in the dark secret of the rose
And the smooth stem of many a weeping tree,
And in your beauty grows.

Come then, my pomp and splendour of the shade,
Most lovely cloud that the hot sun made black
As dark-leaved airs, —

Come then, O precious cloud,

Lean to my heart : no shade of a rich tree
Shall pour such splendour as your heart to me.

'Lo, this is she that was the world's desire'

In the green winter night
That is dark as the cypress bough, the pine,
The fig-tree and the vine
When our long sun into the dark had set
And made but winter branches of his rays,
The heart, a ghost,
Said to our life farewell — the shadow leaves
The body when our long dark sun has gone. . . .

And this is the winter's Æthiopian clime,
Darkening all beauty. . . .

Now in the winter night
The seed of the fire
Fallen from the long-leaved planets is of gold.
But she is old
And no more loved by the stars. . . . O now no more
The gold kiss of Orion burns her cheek.

Grey dust bent over the fire in the winter night,
Was this the crone that once Adonis loved,

Were those the veins that heard the sirens' song?
Age shrinks her heart to dust, black as the Ape's
And shrunk and cold
Is Venus now, grown blackened, noseless, old!

So changed is she by Time's appalling night
That even her bone can no more stand upright

But leans as if it thirsted — for what spring?
The Ape's bent skeleton foreshadowing

With head bent from the light, its only kiss.
Now she, too, knows the metamorphosis

When the appalling lion-claws of age
With talons tear the cheek and heart, yet rage

For life devours the bone, a tigerish fire :
The craters in the heart weep to that mire
The flesh . . . but the long wounds torn by Time in the
 golden cheek
Seem the horizons of the endless cold.
Lo, this is she that was the world's desire.

Crouched by the fire, blind from her earth's thick hood
Of dust, she, Atridae-like, devours her blood

With hopeless love, and knows the anguish of the bone
Deserted by all love, with Death alone.

And now the small immortal serpent cries,
'To my embrace the foolish and the wise

Will come,' and the first soundless wrinkles fall like snow
On many a golden cheek, and none may know

Seeing the ancient wrinkled shadow-shape
If this be long-dead Venus, or the Ape

Our great precursor. . . .

I felt pity for the dust,
And Time, the earth from which our beauty grows,
The old unchanging memory of the bone —
That porphyry whence grew the summer rose ;

For when spring comes, the dew with golden foot
Will touch the hidden leaf, the wrinkled root :

Then the grey dust that was the world's desire
Will sigh, ' Once I was wild and blind
In my desires as the snow. I loved where I list

And was violent like spring roots. . . . O might I feel
again
The violence, the uproar of bursting buds, the wild-beast
fire

Of spring in my veins — and know again the kiss
That holds all the spring redness and the rose that weeps
in the blood —
O might I know but this ! ’

The Swans

IN the green light of water, like the day
Under green boughs, the spray
And air-pale petals of the foam seem flowers, —
Dark-leaved arbutus blooms with wax-pale bells
And their faint honey-smells,
The velvety syringa with smooth leaves,
Gloxinia with a green shade in the snow,
Jasmine and moon-clear orange-blossoms and green
 blooms
Of the wild strawberries from the shade of woods.
Their showers
Pelt the white women under the green trees,
Venusia, Cosmopolita, Pistillarine —
White solar statues, white rose-trees in snow
Flowering for ever, child-women, half stars
Half flowers, waves of the sea, born of a dream.

Their laughter flying through the trees like doves,
These angels come to watch their whiter ghosts
In the air-pale water, archipelagos
Of stars and young thin moons from great wings falling
As ripples widen.
These are their ghosts, their own white angels these !
O great wings spreading —
Your bones are made of amber, smooth and thin
Grown from the amber dust that was a rose
Or nymph in swan-smooth waters.

 But Time's winter falls
With snows as soft, as soundless. . . . Then, who knows
Rose-footed swan from snow, or girl from rose ?

PART IV



One Day in Spring

GONE is the winter's cold
In the wild wood and the heart —
And warm are the young leaves and the budding spray.
' O heart, O eyes, O lips that will grow not old,
The waters love the moon, the sun the day,
As I love you, my day's darling ! '

Said the youth of the world. But a living dead man
walked
In the spring fire and talked
As if one heard him — though in all the spring
No heart was listening.
(' O heed him not, my dew with golden feet
Flying from me, my dew that is born of the spring heat. ')

' On that last day she said, " I shall be cold
To the world's end, without your kiss . . . but when
Death is so old
He no more feels the pain
Of jealous love, I shall be yours again.

On that great holiday
There'll be no work, no fear for tomorrow's bread
Nor will the nations rage —
And only Death will feel the sorrow of old age."

Then, Sun of my life, she went to warm the Dead,
And I must now go sunless in their stead.

I felt not the cold wind blow, —
Nor the change of the sun :
For earth and sea
And my heart were one :
There nothing grew ; they nothing knew
Except the world was done !
They clothed a dead man in my dress
Who rose in the morning sorrow —
And all day walked the earth, waving at Nothingness
Now high, now low —
Changing with every wind like a scarecrow.

Sometimes my voice would sound from those dead lips :
For I who had seen
Each stain of age, fatigue, upon her cheek —
Dimming her beauty — I who had feared to see
That eternal truth the Bone
Laid bare by Death — cried now “ Come home ! — what-
ever stain
Death laid upon you, in whatever guise
You are now, I should know your heart ! Come home,
out of the rain,

The cold ! How shall I bear my heart without its beat,
— My clay without its soul ? . . . I am alone —
More cold than you are in your grave’s long night,
That has my heart for covering, warmth and light.”

The cathedrals and their creeds were built above
Her heart. And all the Babels of the world,
Their bells and madness tolled — “ Dead ” — over her
love . . .
But the earth and all the roots of trees in the winter earth
Yet could not hold her down —
The tides of seas and seasons could not drown

Her heart. . . . So after twelve months in her grave
She came to me and gave

Her kiss . . . humbly and pleadingly she crept beside
My bed and looked at me with those hollow eyes
That seemed as if they had wept
For the stains Death left upon her beauty, fearing I might
Love her no more — so she came home from her endless
night

— And the lips of my dead love were warm to me.
But the lips, the heart, should be dust-dun, death-cold
From that long night . . . and so I feared to hold
That heart that came warm from the grave . . . afraid
Of that eternity of love I laid
Death's earth upon her heart ; for this
Dead man in my dress dared not kiss
Her who laid by Death's cold lest I
Should feel it when she came to lie
Upon my heart . . . my dead love gave
Lips warm with love though from her grave :
And I gave Death her love — the only light
And fire she had to warm her eternal night.'

So he went by. The snowflake's star can see
Its ephemeral cold in the eternity

Of the rock-crystal's six rays . . . so light grief and
waterfalls
See that eternal grief that melts not though the last spring
calls

The heart. . . . But where the wild birds sing
We walked together
And pitied the poor Dead for whom the Spring
Is cold . . . for all the strange green fire
In eyes, on hair, — the world, the veins, changed into
emeralds !

O Dead, your heart is gone ! you cannot weep ;
And like the unborn child's should be your sleep.

But on your lips, long worn away, a youthful smile
Remains, a thing of sorrow —

And wasted so thin by hopeless love you seem a
 shade —
An echo only —

You wait for one who comes not, for the hour
When your lips spoke, and winter broke in flower,

The Parthenon was built by your dead kiss . . .
But what should love seek now you are changed to
 this

Thin piteous wreck ! — yet strong as the Prophet's
 rock
No grief tears waters from that stone to mock

Death's immobility — and changed to stone
Those eyelids see one sight, and one alone.

What do they see ? Some lost and childish kiss
In summer, in the dews of a dead morning —
The meeting, and clasp of hands, the last farewell
Among the morning sorrows ? Now in spring

Beneath the young green-blooming strawberry
In the deep groves they sigh for the forgotten bliss
Grown dead and rotten, of their lover's kiss,
Forgetting the young heart grows old
And in the spring night they must sleep alone.

But in the spring warmth, creatures, faiths, and men
Awaken in the sun —
The coldness of the heart
Is with the winter done —

And the waters love the moon, the sun the day —
As I love my day's darling.

Though all the lovers of the world
Grow old, and fade, and die —
Yet how should you and I?
For the world was only made that we should love.
O hair, O eyes, O lips that will never grow old !

Metamorphosis

THE coral-cold snow seemed the Parthenon —
Huge peristyle of temples that are gone —

And in the winter's Æthiopian shade —
The time of the cold heart and the world's winter —
Death seemed our only clime —
And Death our bell to chime

The passing tears among the heavy leaves
Where black as a Negress in the winter night
Is the face of Beauty in the great moon's light.

But all the nations and the centuries
And weight of Death press down upon mine eyes
In this deep-perfumed dwelling of the Dead ;

The dark green country temple of the snows
Hides the porphyry bones of nymphs whence grew the
 rose

And dark green dog-haired leaves of strawberries
All marked with maps of unknown lands and seas,

Among the grass that seemed like beaver's wool,
In winter, where that ruined temple's cool

Shade fell. Here, once in Spring, the dew with a golden
 foot

Made tremble every leaf and hidden root,

And the rainbow gave those berries light above —
The dark rose gave them all her secret love

Until those coral tears of the rich light
Changed the dark earth into a starry sky,
With those great berries, bright as Sirius' pomp and
 emperry.

But lost in the climate of the winter shade
And the immensity of the long cold,

We must lie down in darkness, have no light
But from the ashes of the outworn heart
Wherein we have no warmth, nor any part —

For we are our own ghost, and our own Death
That has no tears to flow, that has no breath.

While Time, a heavy ghost, groans through thick
leaves . . .

Time is a weary bell which ever grieves :

It is not Death which is the skeleton —
But Time . . . Death merely strikes the hour of one —

Night's creeping end ere light begins again . . .
O Death has never worm for heart and brain

Like that which Time conceives to fill his grave —
Devouring the last faith, the word Love gave,

Changing the light in the eyes to heavy tears,
Changing the beat of the heart to Time's — the years

Wherein we listen for that little sound
Of footsteps that come never to our ground.

And Time, like Echo, sounds in the winter air
And speaks with the dull voice of our despair —

Sighs ' Terrible these winter nights must be
To the deserted Dead . . . if we could see

The eternal anguish of the skeleton —
So fleshless even the dog leaves it alone !

Not theirs the sleep of love . . . alone they lie
While the spring heats, the fevers of the world, pass by :

For warmth, they have the rags about the bone ;
Devoured by black disastrous dreams, alone

The worm is their companion . . . vast years
Pile mountain-high above, and the last tears

Freeze to gigantic polar nights of ice
Around the heart, through crumbling centuries.'

O mortal eyes ! O beat of the mortal heart
That measures all Death's grandeurs by the part

You have in Time. . . . Not theirs the Gehenna of
the bone
Deserted by the flesh, with Death alone :

But like a small child, close to their mother's breast
They sleep in the arms of Earth with a blind trust —
Forgetting all their hungers and the lust
For life. In their lost innocence they rest,

Not envying the old loves and the old sins,
The maelstrom of the blood, the secrecy
Of Spring, the instinct of blind lust from which a world
begins —

But knowing the birth of a great flower among a million
Flowers, the extinction of a far-off sun
And its many-hued perihelion and aphelion —
The extinction of a heart — all these are one.

For what should they know of lesser loves and fears
From their long aeons, — or of the passing years,

And nights more dark than theirs, wherein we grope
From the more terrible abyss of hope

To soft despair . . . the nights when creeping Fear
Crumples our hearts, knowing when Age appear

Our sun, our love, will leave us more alone
Than the black mouldering rags about the bone !

Age shrinks our hearts to ape-like dust . . . that Ape
Looks through the eyes where all Death's chasms gape

Between ourself and what we used to be . . .
My soul, my Lazarus, know you not me ?

What gap of Death is there ? What has Time done
That I should be unworthy of the Sun ? . . .

Time is the worm, but Death our Sun, illumining our
old
Dim-jewelled bones. Death is our winter cold

Before the rising of the sap . . . Death's light upon the
eyes
Could make each shapeless lump of clay grow wise :

The topaz, diamonds, sapphires of the bone,
That mineral in our earth's dark mine, alone
Leap to the eastern light . . . Death-blinded eyes
See beyond wild bird-winged discoveries.

Death is the Sun's heat making all men black !
. . . O Death, the splendours die in the leaves'
track. . . .

All men are Æthiopian shades of thee.
The wild and glittering fleece Parthenope

Loosened, more rich than feathers of bright birds —
Though rich and thick as Æthiopian herds

Died like the wave, or early light that grew
In eastern quarries ripening precious dew.

Though lovely are the tombs of the dead nymphs
On the heroic shore, the glittering plinths
Of jacinth, hyacinthine waves profound
Sigh of the beauty out of sight and sound ;

POEMS

1945-1947

THE CANTICLE OF THE ROSE

TO DAVID, ONLY CHILD OF MY COUSINS
VERONICA AND FRANK GILLIAT
KILLED IN THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN 1944



The Bee Oracles

I. The Bee-Keeper

TO DENYS AND ELIZABETH KILHAM ROBERTS

IN the plain of the world's dust like a great Sea,
The golden thunders of the Lion and the Honey-Bee
In the Spirit, held with the Sun a Colloquy

Where an old woman stood — thick Earthiness —
Half Sun, half Clod,
A plant alive from the root, still blind with earth
And all the weight of Death and Birth.

She, in her primitive dress
Of clay, bent to her hives
And heard her sisters of the barren lives

Begin to stir . . . the Priestesses of the Gold Comb
Shaped by Darkness, and the Prophetesses
Who from a wingless pupa, spark of gold

In the Dark, rose with gold bodies bright as the Lion,
And the trace of the Hand of God on ephemeral wings
To sing the great Hymn of Being to the lost :

‘ This Earth is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this Earth . . . O bright immortal Lover
That is incarnate in the body’s earth —
O bright immortal Lover Who is All ! ’

‘ This Water is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this Water . . . O the bright immortal
Lover
That is in water and that is the seed
Of Life . . . O bright immortal Lover Who is All ! ’

‘ This Fire is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this Fire . . . O bright immortal Lover
That is in fire and shines in mortal speech —
O bright immortal Lover Who is All ! ’

‘ This Air is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this Air . . . O bright immortal Lover
That is in air and is our Being’s breath —
O bright immortal Lover Who is All ! ’

‘ This Sun is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this Sun . . . O bright immortal Lover
That is in the sun and is our Being’s sight —
O bright immortal Lover Who is All ! ’

‘ This Thunder is the honey of all Beings, and all Beings
Are the honey of this Thunder . . . O the bright immortal
Lover,
That is in thunder and all voices — the beasts’ roar —
Thunder of rising saps — the voice of Man !
O bright immortal Lover Who is All ! ’

This was the song that came from the small span
Of thin gold bodies shaped by the holy Dark. . . .

And the old woman in her mortal dress of clay
(That plant alive from the root, still thick with earth)
Felt all the saps of Day.

And in the plain of dust like a great Sea
The Lion in the Spirit cried, 'Destroy — destroy
The old and wrinkled Darkness.' But the Sun
— That great gold simpleton — laughed like a boy,
And kissed the old woman's cheek and blessed her clay.

The great Sun laughed, and dancing over Chaos,
Shouts to the dust 'O mortal Lover! Think what
wonders
May be born of our love — what golden heroes!'

The Bee in the Spirit said 'The gold combs lay
In the cold rock and the slain Lion, amid spent golden
thunders.'

II. *A Sleepy Tune*

TO VIOLET GORDON WOODHOUSE

'I WAS a Gold Man. . . . Now I lie under the earth
And only the young wheat-ear
Grows from my hollow breast like a gold sound . . .
Amid the asp-aspersions of the dust,
The old assertions
Of that sleep-causing Asp with swelling head.
And only the bull-voiced thunders of the gold ripe wheat
Answer the Augur in this long and sleepy August.'

The Gold Man who was King raised up his sleepy head . .
'Is this the time of our advance upon the Sun?
Will he kiss the loveless
And stretch himself on our earth in love once more?
Lions do not bury gold and seek again
Their treasure . . . but the Sun sees our gold nature
Sunken in earth, and comes again to the Ore,
The growing plant and the root with the nature of gold
(Whose generation is in earth) — the Ore, precursor
Of the Plant Kingdom, that with growth, becomes alive.

In the time when the Sun of the heart is in the sign of
the Lion
I lie far from the forgotten thunders. . . .'
But near the Tomb the Thriae, Priestesses of the Gold
Comb,
Buzz and hum of the forgotten wonders,
And of the wind from the Tomb that is no more
Than the wind of the honey-hive that drifts to them over
their gold floor.
Their heads are white as if from barley-flour
— And thin are their gold bodies.

This is the hour

When they sing of the noon of the world : ' There was a
King
Who reigned in Babylon —
Grown sleepy now. . . . His hair was like the honey-red
foxes
Burned by fires like the Sun in the wheat-festival :
— He lies embalmed by bees . . . the sweetness lapping
over
Him, with only Darkness for a lover. . . .
And now in his town no more than our gold Comb.

And carrying a young lion,

A solar hero, King of Lydia,
Stood on his city walls. . . .
You would not know that King or lion now from the
dust ground from the wheat-ears.

Great Alexander lies in a mask of gold
White honey mummified . . . as if it were gold armour.
And now only the cold
Wind from the honey-hive can know
If still from strength comes sweetness — if from the
lion-heart
The winged swarms rise ! '

This was the song of the Bee-Priestesses. . . .
But the Gold Man lying in the dark like the wingless pupa
That lies in their cells, said ' I hear the solar jubilation
Come to the heart and saps of Being . . . the roar of
ripeness.

For the Sun is the Ardent Belief
That sees life in the aridities of the dust,
In the seed and the base excrement and the world's
fevers. . . .

He loves alike, the common dust of the streets
And the lovers' lips like the gold fires burning Troy.
The Sun kisses the loveless,
The mouth of the condemned by Man, the dog-mouth
and the lion-fang
Deep in the heart. . . . He comes to the criminal whose
nature

Was crippled before his birth by a new gravitation
That changed the solar system of the heart
To a universe reigned over by deformation. . . .
None is condemned. . . . Then why should we lie
loveless ?

He will clothe us again in gold and a little love.'

Mary Stuart to James Bothwell

(Casket Letter No. II)

O you who are my heavenly pain of Hell,
My element, my Paradise of the First Man
That knows not sin — the eternity wherein I dwell !
Before the Flood were you not my primeval clay ?
Did you not shape me from that chaos to the form
Of that which *men* call Murder — *I*, the light of the
First Day ?

Leaving you, I was sundered like the Sea !
Departed from the place where I left my heart
I was as small as any body may be
Whose heart is gone — small as the shade of Spring
That has no heart.

My mate, the leper-King,
White as a man of diamonds, spotted over
With the ermines of God's wrath for a kingly robe
— My leper-stick of bone

Covered with melting snows, to which I am crucified —
— Saw not Death gape wide
Wearing my smile, and bade me come again as his lover.

I was the thunder of the seas within man's blood, and
the world's wonder !
But he sold my kiss for that of the fair-skinned Sickness
Who melted him away like the spring snows :
The bite of the bright-spotted leopard from Hell's
thickets — this he chose !
She devoured his bones like fire . . . the bite that tore
him asunder
Hidden behind the mouth of the ultimate Rose.

I lodged him in a beggar's house, Death-low
And ragged as a leper's flesh. . . . Then, weeping like
the Spring

From amid his melting snow
He begged me watch by him, night long. Did I not
 know
His heart is wax,
While mine is diamond that no blow can break —
But only the touch of your hand, I had pitied those lidless
 eyes that must wake
Until Death seal them, mimicking my kiss.

But how should Pity stand between you and me !
The Devil sunder us from our mates, and God
Knit us together
Until nor man nor devil could tell lover from lover
In our heaven of damnation ! Could these sunder our
 clay,
Or the seas of our blood ? As well might they part the
 fires
That would burn to the bottom of Hell. . . . But there
 is no Hell —
We have kissed it away.

The Song of Dido

TO MARGARET DREW

My Sun of Death is to the deep reversedly
What the great Sun of heaven is to the height
In the violent heat
When Sirius comes to lie at the Sun's feet.
My Sun of Death is all depth, heaven's Sun
All height, and the air of the whole world lies between
Those Suns.

Now only the Dog sits by my bier
Where I lie flaming from my heart. The five dogs of
the senses
Are no more hunting now.
For after the conflagration of the summer
Of youth, and the violent Suns,
My veins of life that seemed so high, the pouring rivers
Of Africa and Asia were but brooks to them,
Were quenched, and Time like fire
Had changed the bone to knotted rubies like the horizons
of the light —
Beyond all summers lies the peony bud
In the veins, and the great paeons of the blood,
The empery of the rose !
Yet once I had thought my bed of love my bier the
highest
Sun of heaven, the height where Sirius is flaming,
And then I thought it Death's Sun, and that there is no
deep
Below. . . . But now I know
That even the hunters in the heart and in the heaven
At last must sleep.

Hymn to Venus

An old Woman speaks :

'LADY, beside the great green wall of Sea
I kneel to make my plea

To you, great Rose of the world. . . . Beyond the seeds
 of petrification, Gorgon of itself,
Behind the face bright as the Rose — I pray
To the seeds of fire in the veins that should
Hold diamonds, iris, beryls for their blood, —

Since you are grown old too, and should be cold,
Although the heat of the air
Has the motion of fire
And light bears in its heart
A cloud of colour . . . where

The great heat ripens in the mine
Of the body's earth, ruby, garnet, and almandine,

And in the dark cloud of the blood still grows
The rainbow, with the ruby and the rose.

Pity me then — a poor old woman who must wear a rag
Of Time's filth for a dress. . . .
O who would care to hold
That miserly rag now.

So I whose nights were violent as the buds
And roots of Spring, was taken by the Cold,

Have only the Cold for lover. Speak then to my dust !
Tell me that nothing dies
But only suffers change, —
And Folly may grow wise.

So we shall be transmuted — you who have grown chill,
and I

Unto whose heart

My love preferred a heart like a winding-sheet of clay
— Fearing my fires would burn his body away !

Gone are your temples that were bright with heat.

But still I kneel at the feet

Of you who were built through aeons by a million lives,

Whispers and instincts, under the coralline light

That seems the great zone of sea-depths. . . .

Though your grief

In my blood grows

Like chlorophyll in the veins of the deep rose,

Our beauty's earthly dress

(Shrunk now to dust) — shall move through all degrees

Of Life, from mineral to plant, and from still rock to the
green laughing seas ;

From life's first trance, the mineral consciousness

That is deep blankness inside an invisible

And rigid box — defined, divisible

And separate from the sheath — (breathe not too deep

If you would know the mineral's tranced sleep. . . .

So measure Time that you, too, are apart

And are not conscious of the living heart) —

To the plant that seeks the light that is its lover

And knows not separation between cover

And sentience. . . . The Sun's heat and the dew's chill

It knows in sleep with an undreaming thrill ;

And colour breathes that is reflected light.

The ray and perfume of the Sun is white :

But when these intermingle as in love

With earth-bound things, the dream begins to move,

And colour that sleeps as in a dreamless cloud
Deep in the mineral trance within that shroud
Then to a fluid changes, grows
Deep in the stem and leaves of the dark rose.

So could the ruby, almandine and garnet move
From this great trance into a dreaming sleep,
They might become the rose whose perfume deep
Grows in eternity, yet is
Still unawakened for its ephemeral hour
Beneath the great light's kiss ;

The rose might seek the untamed rainbow through
The remembering Eden of a drop of dew ;
Until at last in heavenly friendship grows
The ruby and the rainbow and the rose.
Nor will the one more precious than the other be —
Or make more rich the Shadow's treasury.

So, Lady, you and I,
And the other wrecks of the heart, left by the Lion
Of love, shall know all transmutations, each degree !
Our apeish skeletons, clothed with rubies by the light
Are not less bright
In the Sun's eye than is the rose . . . and youth, and we,
Are but waves of Time's sea.

Folly and wisdom have dust equal-sweet,
And in the porphyry shade
Of this world's noon
The Poor seem Dives, burning in his robes bright as the
 rose
— Such transmutations even the brief moment made ! ’

Spring Morning

TO KENNETH AND JANE CLARK

AFTER the thunders of night-wandering Zagreus,
The unseen suns were singing where, day-long, laughter
The Janus-face, turned black and terrible, as if lightning
Struck it among bright vine-tips.

The dancing seas of delight lie on young leaves,
Young heart upon young heart. O night of ferment
under earth !

The sapphire tears fallen from the heavens will reach
The fissures in the heart and rock, too deep
And narrow for the grandeur of the Sun.
But what has the Night ripened ?
What depths in that sapphiric mine, our bodies' earth ?

Then rose our Sun . . . He shouts through all Creation . . .
His gold fires
Shake from each heaven to heaven . . . And at his kiss
From hemisphere to hemisphere the rising fires in all the
hearts and homes of Men
Respond ; and I, still wrapped in darkness, cry
With the voice of all those rolling fires, ' Hail to the Sun,
and the great Sun in the heart of Man '
Till the last fire fall in the last abyss.

In the violent Spring, amid the thunders of the sap and
the blood in the heart,
The Sun answers the cries
From the frost that shines like fire or the dust of Venus in
the time
That knows the first rites of the Croconides
Fertilising the saffron.

And the sound of Earth's desire
Reaches the bones of the Lion, the Horse, the Man,
For under their great Death

Like Spring, they feel the great saps rise —
The power of the Sun.

And in the House of Gold, the House of the Dead
The bones of ancient lions shake like fire ;
The dead men, the gold forms to whom all growth belongs

Hear the shout of the god in the Gold Rain
And its marriage with the earth,
And the crocus, whose race has sprung from gold, is
born again.

Then the King who is part of the saffronic dust —
He of the gold sinews, withered now —
Sighed ' Darkness clasps the root, the gold, the heart.

But the gold is brother to the root ! Will it learn to grow
Through the long ages till it change to plant ?
Will the Sun kiss its long hair ? And will my heart
Be changed to gold ? . . . Ah, when shall I know

Again the kiss outburning all the fires of the crocus ?
When from gold lips that are dust shall I light my
Sun ? '

Then from the wide pale lips of the dust came the great
sound
Of the Ritual Laughter
At the impiety of Death, the sacrilege.

' For,' said the great dust to the small serpent that
devours
The saffronic dust of Venus, the spring hours, . . .
' See how the Sun comes with his gold love to kiss our
baseness !

He pities the small worm and its lipless mouthing
At the earth's bosom like a babe at its mother's breast ;

From the mouthing of the small worm, when the world
began,
Arose the speech, arose the kiss of Man.

And the beast who shares with Man, Time and the
beat of the heart,
And the great gold beasts who shake their fiery manes
Through all the pastures of high heaven, are as one.'

The Sun comes to the saps of Reason . . . sighs all sighs
And suffers all ambitions . . . cries
To the subterranean fires in Croesus' heart, the unborn
wheat,
'Your gold must grow that the starved may eat!'

And from the Chaos of our Nature, the brute gold
In every seam and vein of earth roars to the Sun.

So day begins, the course of the fathering Sun
And the solar heroes, men of our common earth,
Of the common task,
With their gold sinews lift the world, reward the
Morning
With the palms of all their martyrdoms and grandeurs,
The dews of Death. . . . And in the roads I see
The common dust change to an Archangel
Beneath the Sun's gold breath.

And I in answer raise
My arms and my long hands like the young vine-boughs
With the gold blood running and sunning
To the tips of the grape-shaped finger-ends,
Raise them in praise.

My blood is one with the young vines — part of the
earth. I shout from my planet, quickening
As the great Sun in the void firmament :
My heart, that gives life to my earth, like water and the
gold
Flames of the laughing Sun, grown strong as these.

A Simpleton

TO DAVID HORNER

IN the autumn the season of ripeness when final redness
Comes to the ore and the earth is with child by the Sun,
Like the bright gold spangles fall'n from the light of
Nature

Flying over the happy fields, the Simpleton
Feeling the warm gold ripen, sat by the wayside
— His broad face having an animal nature (the beast of
burden

Who has turned prophet, the beast in our earth
unconscious),

A simple creature, happy as butterflies,
Or as the dancing star that has risen from Chaos.
And the world hangs like a ripe apple — the great gold
planets

Lying with Evil and Good in the ripened core.
The old men Abraham-bearded like the auburn
Sun of harvest walk in the holy fields
Where the Sun forgives and remakes the shape of Evil
And, laughing, forgives lean Virtue. . . . Gravity yields
The gold that was hidden deep in the earth, in the map-like
Lines of a smile made holy by Light, and the Sun
With his gold mouth kisses the skin that shines like
red fire,

And shouts to the lowly, the dust that is his lover :
' See how of my love and my shining I never tire,
But rule over thunders and Chaos : the lore of the bee
and the great lion's raging

To me are equal in grandeur, the hump of the cripple
And the mountain that hides the veins of brute gold are
as one —

And to me the jarring atoms are parted lovers !'
And this is the lore the Simpleton learns from his
nature —

Lifting his face in blindness and happiness up to the Sun.'

Song

TO JOHN AND ALEXANDRINE RUSSELL

Now that Fate is dead and gone
And that Madness reigns alone,
Still the Furies shake the fires
Of their torches in the street
Of my blood. . . . And still they stand
In the city's street that tires
Of the tread of Man.

Three old Rag-pickers are they
Clothed with grandeur by the light
As a Queen, but blind as Doom
Fumbling for the rag of Man
In an empty room.

Now they take the place of Fate
In whom the flames of Madness ran
Since her lidless eyes were cursed
With the world-expunging sight
Of the heart of Man.

How simple was the time of Cain
Before the latter Man-made Rain
Washed away all loss and gain
And the talk of right and wrong —
Murdered now and gone.

And the ghost of Man is red
With the sweep of the world's blood. .
In this late equality
Would you know the ghost of Man
From the ghost of a Flea ?

But still the fires of the great Spring
In the desolate fields proclaim

. ' Eternity . . . those wild fires shout
Of Christ the new song.

Run those fires from field to field !
I walk alone and ghostlily
Burning with Eternity's
Fires, and quench the Furies' song
In flame that never tires.

The Coat of Fire

AMID the thunders of the falling Dark
In the Tartarean darkness of the fog
I walk, a Pillar of Fire
On pavements of black marble, hard
And wide as the long boulevard
Of Hell . . . I, in whose veins the Furies wave
Their long fires, move where purgatories, heavens, hells,
and worlds
Wrought by illusion, hide in the human breast
And tear the enclosing heart. . . . And the snow fell
(Thin flakes of ash from Gomorrah) on blind faces
Turned to the heedless sky. . . . A dress has the sound
Of Reality, reverberates like thunder.
And ghosts of aeons and of equinoxes
(Of moments that seemed aeons, and long partings)
Take on the forms of fashionable women
With veils that hide a new Catastrophe, and under
Is the fall of a world that was a heart. Some doomed to
descend
Through all the hells and change into the Dog
Without its faithfulness, the Crocodile
Without its watchfulness, and then to Pampean mud.
In the circles of the city's hells beneath the fog
These bear, to light them, in the human breast,
The yellow dull light from the raging human dust,
The dull blue light from the brutes, light red as rust
Of blood from eyeless weeping ghosts, light black as
smoke
From hell. And those breasts bear
No other light. . . . They circle in the snow
Where in the dust the apterous
Fates turned insects whisper 'Now abandon
Man the annelida. Let all be wingless
That hangs between the abyss and Abaddon.'
The Catastrophes with veils and trains drift by,
And I to my heart, disastrous Comet, cry

‘ Red heart, my Lucifer, how fallen art thou,
And lightless, I ! ’

The dresses sweep the dust of mortality
And roll the burden of Atlas’ woe, changed to a stone
Up to the benches where the beggars sway —
Their souls alone as on the Judgment Day —
In their Valley of the myriad Dry Bones under world-tall
houses.

Then with a noise as if in the thunders of the Dark
All sins, griefs, aberrations of the world rolled to confess,
Those myriad Dry Bones rose to testify :

‘ See her, the Pillar of Fire !

The aeons of Cold

And all the deaths that Adam has endured
Since the first death, can not outfreeze our night.
And where is the fire of love that will warm our hands ?
There is only this conflagration
Of all the sins of the world ! To the dust’s busyness
She speaks of the annihilation
Of every form of dust, burned down to Nothingness !
To the small lovers, of a kiss that seems the red
Lightning of Comets firing worlds, — and of a Night
That shall outburn all nights that lovers know —
The last red Night before the Judgment Day !
O Pillar of Flame, that drifts across the world to Nowhere !
The eyes are seas of fire ! All forms, all sights,
And all sensations are on fire ! The storms
Of blood, a whirlpool of the flame ! the ears, all sounds
Of all the world, a universe of fire ! All smells, a ravening
Raging cyclone of wild fire ! The nose, burned quite away !
The tongue is on fire, all tastes on fire, the mind
Is red as noon upon the Judgment Day !
The tears are rolling, falling worlds of fire !
With what are these on fire ? With passion, hate,
Infatuation, and old age, and death,
With sorrow, longing, and with labouring breath,
And with despair and life are these on fire !
With the illusions of the world, the flames of lust,

And raging red desire !
A Pillar of Fire is she in the empty dust,
And will not change those fires into warmth for our hands,'
Said the beggars, lolling and rocking
The heedless world upon a heaving shoulder.

THREE POEMS OF THE ATOMIC BOMB



1. *Dirge for the New Sunrise*

*(Fifteen minutes past eight o'clock, on the morning
of Monday the 6th of August 1945)*

BOUND to my heart as Ixion to the wheel,
Nailed to my heart as the Thief upon the Cross,
I hang between our Christ and the gap where the world
was lost

And watch the phantom Sun in Famine Street
— The ghost of the heart of Man . . . red Cain
And the more murderous brain
Of Man, still redder Nero that conceived the death
Of his mother Earth, and tore
Her womb, to know the place where he was conceived.

But no eyes grieved —
For none were left for tears :
They were blinded as the years
Since Christ was born. Mother or Murderer, you have
given or taken life —
Now all is one !

There was a morning when the holy Light
Was young. The beautiful First Creature came
To our water-springs, and thought us without blame.

Our hearts seemed safe in our breasts and sang to the
Light —
The marrow in the bone

We dreamed was safe . . . the blood in the veins, the
sap in the tree
Were springs of Deity.

But I saw the little Ant-men as they ran
Carrying the world's weight of the world's filth
And the filth in the heart of Man —
Compressed till those lusts and greeds had a greater
heat than that of the Sun.

And the ray from that heat came soundless, shook the sky
As if in search of food, and squeezed the stems
Of all that grows on the earth till they were dry
— And drank the marrow of the bone :
The eyes that saw, the lips that kissed, are gone
Or black as thunder lie and grin at the murdered Sun.

The living blind and seeing Dead together lie
As if in love. . . . There was no more hating then,
And no more love : Gone is the heart of Man.

2. *The Shadow of Cain*

TO C. M. BOWRA

UNDER great yellow flags and banners of the ancient Cold
Began the huge migrations
From some primeval disaster in the heart of Man.

There were great oscillations
Of temperature. . . . You knew there had once been
warmth ;

But the Cold is the highest mathematical Idea . . . the
Cold is Zero —
The Nothing from which arose
All Being and all variation. . . . It is the sound too high
for our hearing, the Point that flows

Till it becomes the line of Time . . . an endless positing
Of Nothing, or the Ideal that tries to burgeon
Into Reality through multiplying. Then Time froze

To immobility and changed to Space.
Black flags among the ice, blue rays
And the purple perfumes of the polar Sun
Freezing the bone to sapphire and to zircon —
These were our days.

And now in memory of great oscillations
Of temperature in that epoch of the Cold,
We found a continent of turquoise, vast as Asia
In the yellowing airs of the Cold : the tooth of a
mammoth ;
And there, in a gulf, a dark pine-sword

To show there had once been warmth and the gulf stream
in our veins
Where only the Chaos of the Antarctic Pole
Or the peace of its atonic coldness reigns.

And sometimes we found the trace
Of a bird's claw in the immensity of the Cold :
The trace of the first letters we could not read :
Some message of Man's need,

And of the slow subsidence of a Race ;
And of great heats in which the Pampean mud was
 formed,
In which the Megatherium Mylodon
Lies buried under Mastodon-trumpetings of leprous Suns.

The Earth had cloven in two in that primal disaster.
But when the glacial period began
There was still some method of communication
Between Man and his brother Man —
Although their speech
Was alien, each from each
As the Bird's from the Tiger's, born from the needs of
 our opposing famines.

Each said ' This is the Race of the Dead . . . their blood
 is cold. . . .
For the heat of those more recent on the Earth
Is higher . . . the blood-beat of the Bird more high
Than that of the ancient race of the primeval Tiger ' :
The Earth had lived without the Bird

In that Spring when there were no flowers like thunders
 in the air.
And now the Earth lies flat beneath the shade of an iron
 wing.
And of what does the Pterodactyl sing —
Of what red buds in what tremendous Spring ? '

The thunders of the Spring began. . . . We came again
After that long migration
To the city built before the Flood by our brother Cain.

And when we reached an open door
The Fate said ' My feet ache.'
The Wanderers said ' Our hearts ache.'

There was great lightning
In flashes coming to us over the floor :
The Whiteness of the Bread
The Whiteness of the Dead
The Whiteness of the Claw —
All this coming to us in flashes through the open door.

There were great emerald thunders in the air
In the violent Spring, the thunders of the sap and the blood
in the heart
— The Spiritual Light, the physical Revelation.

In the streets of the City of Cain there were great
Rainbows
Of emeralds : the young people, crossing and meeting.

And everywhere
The great voice of the Sun in sap and bud
Fed from the heart of Being, the panic Power,
The sacred Fury, shouts of Eternity
To the blind eyes, the heat in the wingèd seed, the fire
in the blood.

And through the works of Death,
The dust's aridity, is heard the sound
Of mounting saps like monstrous bull-voices of unseen
fearful mimes :
And the great rolling world-wide thunders of that drum-
ming underground

Proclaim our Christ, and roar ' Let there be harvest !
Let there be no more Poor —
For the Son of God is sowed in every furrow ! '

We did not heed the Cloud in the Heavens shaped like
the hand
Of Man. . . . But there came a roar as if the Sun and
Earth had come together —
The Sun descending and the Earth ascending
To take its place above . . . the Primal Matter
Was broken, the womb from which all life began.
Then to the murdered Sun a totem pole of dust arose in
memory of Man.

The cataclysm of the Sun down-pouring
Seemed the roar
Of those vermilion Suns the drops of the blood
That bellowing like Mastodons at war
Rush down the length of the world — away — away —

The violence of torrents, cataracts, maelstroms, rains
That went before the Flood —
These covered the earth from the freshets of our brothers'
veins ;

And with them, the forked lightnings of the gold
From the split mountains,
Blasting their rivals, the young foolish wheat-ears
Amid those terrible rains.

The gulf that was torn across the world seemed as if the
beds of all the Oceans
Were emptied. . . . Naked, and gaping at what once had
been the Sun,
Like the mouth of the Universal Famine
It stretched its jaws from one end of the Earth to the other.

And in that hollow lay the body of our brother
Lazarus, upheaved from the world's tomb.
He lay in that great Death like the gold in the husk
Of the world . . . and round him, like spent lightnings,
lay the Ore —
The balm for the world's sore.

NOTES

JODELLING SONG

Page 50

THIS is founded on Gertrude Stein's 'Accents in Alsace' (The Watch on the Rhine) contained in her book, *Geography and Plays* :

'Sweeter than water or cream or ice. Sweeter than bells of roses. Sweeter than winter or summer or spring. Sweeter than pretty posies. Sweeter than anything is my queen and loving is her nature.

'Loving and good and delighted and best is her little King and Sire whose devotion is entire, who has but one desire to express the love which is hers to inspire.

'In the photograph the Rhine hardly showed.

'In what way do chimes remind you of singing? In what ways do birds sing? In what way are forests black or white?

'We saw them blue.

'With forget-me-nots.

'In the midst of our happiness we were very pleased.'

GOLD COAST CUSTOMS

'The Negroes indulge that perfect contempt for humanity which in its bearing on Justice and Morality is the fundamental characteristic of the race. They have, moreover, no knowledge of the immortality of the soul, although spectres are supposed to appear. The undervaluing of humanity among them reaches an incredible degree of intensity. Tyranny is regarded as no wrong, and cannibalism is looked upon as quite customary and proper. Among us instinct deters from it, if we can speak of instinct at all as appertaining to man. But with the Negro this is not the case, and the devouring of human flesh is altogether consonant with the general principles of the African race; to the sensual Negro, human flesh is but an object of sense—mere flesh. At the death of a king hundreds are killed and eaten; prisoners are butchered and their flesh sold in the market-place; the victor is accustomed to eat the flesh of his fallen foe.'—Hegel, *Philosophy of History*.

It is needless to add that this refers only to a past age, and that, in quoting this passage, I intend no reflection whatever upon the African races of our time. This passage no more casts a reflection

upon them than a passage referring to the cruelties of the Tudor age casts a reflection upon the English of our present age. — E. S.

Page 130, line 5

‘Munza rattles his bones in the dust.’ King Munza reigned, in 1874, over the Monbuttoos, a race of cannibals in Central Africa. These notes are taken from Dr. Georg Schweinfurth’s *The Heart of Africa* (translated by Ellen Frewer, published by Messrs. Sampson Low). Of the Monbuttoos and their neighbours the Niam-Niam, we read: ‘Human fat is universally sold. . . . Should any lone and solitary individual die, uncared for . . . he would be sure to be devoured in the very district in which he lived. During our residence at the Court of Munza the general rumour was quite current that nearly every day some little child was sacrificed to supply his meal. There are cases in which bearers who died from fatigue had been dug out of the graves in which they had been buried . . . in order that they might be devoured. The cannibalism of the Monbuttoos is the most pronounced of all the known nations of Africa. Surrounded as they are by a number of people who, being inferior to them in culture, are consequently held in great contempt, they have just the opportunity which they want for carrying on expeditions of war and plunder, which result in the acquisition of a booty which is especially coveted by them, consisting of human flesh. But with it all, the Monbuttoos are a noble race of men, men who display a certain national pride . . . men to whom one may put a reasonable question and receive a reasonable answer. The Nubians can never say enough in praise of their faithfulness in friendly intercourse and of the order and stability of their national life. According to the Nubians, too, the Monbuttoos were their superiors in the arts of war.’

Page 134, lines 31 and 32

‘And her soul, the cannibal Amazon’s mart.’

‘Tradition alleges that in former times a state composed of women made itself famous by its conquests: it was a state at whose head was a woman. She is said to have pounded her son in a mortar, and to have had the blood of pounded children constantly at hand. She is said to have driven away or put to death all the males, and commanded the death of all male children. These furies destroyed everything in the neighbourhood, and were driven to constant plunderings because they did not cultivate the land. . . . This infamous state, the report goes on to say, subsequently disappeared.’ — Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, chapter on Africa.

INVOCATION

Page 151, lines 3 to 7

‘The blood, when present in the veins as part of a body, a generative part, too, and endowed with soul, being the soul’s immediate

instrument, and primary seat . . . the blood, seeming also to have a share of another divine body and being suffused with divine animal heat, suddenly acquires remarkable and most excellent powers, and is analogous to the essence of the stars. In so far as it is spirit, it is the hearth, the Vesta, the household divinity, the innate heat, the sun of the microcosm, the fire of Plato; not because like common fire it lightens, burns and destroys, but because, by a vague and incessant motion it preserves, nourishes, and aggrandizes itself. It further deserves the name of spirit, inasmuch as it is radical moisture, at once the ultimate and the proximate and the primary aliment.' — William Harvey (*The Works of William Harvey, M.D.*, translated from the Latin by R. Willis, Sydenham Society, 1841).

HARVEST

Page 156, lines 24 to 28

'It is obvious that the heat contained in animals is not fire, neither does it derive its origin from fire': Aristotle, quoted by William Harvey (*The Works of William Harvey, M.D.*, translated from the Latin by R. Willis, Sydenham Society, 1842). Harvey continues: 'I maintain the same thing of the innate heat and the blood: I say that they are not fire and neither do they derive their origin from fire. They rather share the nature of some other, and that a more divine body and substance. They act by no faculty or property of the elements . . . as, in producing an animal, it' (the generative factor) 'surpasses the power of the elements — as it is a spirit, namely, and the inherent nature of that spirit corresponds to the essence of the stars, so is there a spirit, or certain force, inherent in the blood, acting superiorly to the power of the elements.'

Page 156, lines 32 and 33

'The inferior world, according to Aristotle, is so continuous and connected with the superior orbits, that all its motions and changes appear to take their rise and to receive directions from thence. . . . Inferior and corruptible things wait upon superior and incorruptible things; but all are subservient to the will of the supreme, omnipotent, and eternal creator.' — *Ibid.*

Page 157, lines 10 and 11

'Best is water of all, and gold, as a flaming sun in the night shineth eminent.' — Pindar.

Page 158, lines 2 to 4

'He gives us men for our refreshment the bread of angels. . . . On the breaking of the Bread thou art not broken, nor art Thou divided, Thou art eaten, but like the Burning Bush, Thou are not consumed.' — St. Thomas Aquinas, *Sermon of the Body of Our Lord*.

EURYDICE

Page 160, lines 3 to 5

. . . 'A most sweet wife, a young wife, Nondum sustulerat flavum Proserpina crinem (not yet had Proserpina tied up her golden hair) — such a wife as no man ever had, so good a wife, but she is now dead and gone, Lethaeoque jacet condita sarcophago (she lies buried in the silent tomb).' — Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Page 160, lines 12 and 13

'The light which God is shines in darkness, God is the true light : to see it one has to be blind and strip God naked of things.' — Meister Eckhart, *Sermons and Collations*, XIX.

Page 161, lines 14 and 15

'And her deadness
Was filling her with fullness
Full as a fruit with sweetness and darkness
Was she with her great death.'

— J. M. Rilke (translated J. B. Leishmann).

LULLABY

Page 166, line 5

The phrase 'out-dance the Babioun' occurs in an Epigram by Ben Jonson.

POOR YOUNG SIMPLETON : II

Page 174, line 15

'Damné par l'arc-en-ciel.' — Arthur Rimbaud, *Une Saison en Enfer*.

A SONG OF THE COLD

Page 184, line 2

'There was the morning when, with Her, you struggled amongst those banks of snow, those green-lipped crevasses, that ice, those black flags and blue rays, and purple perfumes of the polar sun. . . .'
— Arthur Rimbaud, 'Metropolitan' (translated by Helen Rootham).

Page 184, lines 6 and 7

'This evening, Devotion to Circeto of the tall mirrors, fat as a fish and glowing like the ten months of the red night (her heart is of amber and musk) — for me a prayer, mute as those regions of night. . . .'
— Arthur Rimbaud, 'Devotion'.

Page 186, line 4

The Miser Foscue, a farmer general of France, existing in Languedoc about 1760. These lines tell his actual story.

TEARS

Page 189, lines 7 and 8

' . . . Methusaleh, with all his hundreds of years, was but a mushroom of a night's growth, to this day ; and all the four monarchies, with all their thousands of years, and all the powerful Kings and the beautiful Queens of this world, were but as a bed of flowers, some gathered at six, some at seven, some at eight, all in one morning, in respect of this day.' — John Donne, Sermon LXXIII.

GREEN SONG

Page 193, line 17

' I wept for names, sounds, faiths, delights and duties lost, taken from a poem, on Cowley's wish to retire to the Plantations.' — Dorothy Wordsworth, *Grasmere Journal*, May 8, 1802.

A YOUNG GIRL

Page 197, line 5

An adaptation from a line in Rilke's ' Venus '.

HOW MANY HEAVENS . . .

Page 198

' . . . The Stancarest will needs have God not only to be in everything, but to be everything, that God is an angel in an angel, and a stone in a stone, and a straw in a straw.' — John Donne, Sermon VII.

HOLIDAY

Page 200, line 19

' God is Intelligible Light.' — St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*.

THE YOUTH WITH THE RED-GOLD HAIR

Page 203

' Did ghosts from those thickets walk about your land
So the tent of the shepherdess was cumbered with gold armour
Till the hero left your mother and turned back into the glade
Bright as his armour ? '

— Sacheverell Sitwell, ' The Black Shepherdess '.

GIRL AND BUTTERFLY

Page 204, line 25

' How Butterflies and breezes move their four wings.' — Sir Thomas Browne, *The Garden of Cyrus*.

THE POET LAMENTS THE COMING OF OLD AGE

Page 207, line 16

This is a reference to a passage in Plato's *The Sophist*.

'LO, THIS IS SHE THAT WAS THE WORLD'S DESIRE'

Page 212, line 22

'Venus.' . . . I used the name merely as a symbol. The poem is not about a far-off myth. . . . It is equally, let us say, about the girl who once walked under the flowering trees in the garden next door, and who is now old and bent, waiting for death in a shuttered house. . . . It is about all beauty gone.

THE SWANS

Page 215, lines 12 to 15

A rough adaptation into English of a prose passage by Paul Eluard.

ONE DAY IN SPRING

Page 219, line 21

'And in the spring night they must sleep alone.' — An adaptation of a line by Sappho.

METAMORPHOSIS

Page 224, lines 22 and 23

Dryden, 'Annus Mirabilis'.

Page 225, line 20

'The Word was from the beginning, and therefore was and is the divine beginning of all things, but now that He has taken the name, which of old was sanctified, the Christ, He is called by me a New Song.' — St. Clement, Address to the Greeks.

Page 225, lines 24 and 25

'The Lord, having taken upon Him all the infirmities of our body, is then covered with the scarlet-coloured blood of all the martyrs.' — St. Hilary, quoted by St. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea*.

THE TWO LOVES

Page 229, lines 11 to 13

' . . . tell the blind

The hue of the flower, or the philosopher
What distance is, in the essence of its being.'

— A paraphrase of a passage by William James.

Page 229, line 19

‘umbilical cords that bind us to strange suns’
— A paraphrase of a sentence by a French author — I do not know his name.

Page 229, lines 21 and 22

‘Bless Jesus Christ with the Rose and his people, which is a nation of living sweetness.’ — Christopher Smart, ‘Rejoice with the Lamb’.

Page 230, lines 1 to 4

came into my head after reading a passage in Lorenz Oken’s *Elements of Philosophy*; the lines are in part a transcript.

THE BEE-KEEPER

Page 234, lines 1 to 25

These verses are founded on the great Second Adhyāya of the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad: ‘This earth is the honey (madhu, the effect) of all beings, and all beings are the honey or madhu, the effect, of this earth. Likewise this bright immortal fusion incorporated in the body (both are madhu). He indeed is the same as that Self, that Immortal, that Brahman, that All,’ etc.

I have founded the lines on this great Hymn with all reverence.

A SLEEPY TUNE

Page 235, line 13

‘When shall you see a lion hide gold in the ground?’ — Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

Page 235, lines 16 to 18

Reference to Lorenz Oken, *Elements of Physiophilosophy*.

Page 236, line 7

Homeric Hymn to Mercury. Passage about the Bee-Priestesses.

Page 236, lines 12 to 14

An ancient Persian manuscript speaks of drowning and embalming a red-haired man in honey.

Page 236, line 18

The solar hero, King of Lydia, appears in *The Golden Bough*.

Page 236, lines 21 and 22

The tale of Alexander the Great being embalmed in white honey occurs more than once in Sir Ernest Wallis Budge’s *Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great*.

MARY STUART TO JAMES BOTHWELL

CASKET LETTER NO. II

Page 238

This is the actual story of the Second Casket Letter, used as proof that Mary was guilty of complicity in the murder of Darnley.

Page 238, lines 8 and 9

A transcript of words ascribed to Mary.

Page 238, line 12

Darnley was known as 'the leper-King'. Towards the end of his life, he suffered from a disease which necessitated the hiding of his face behind a taffeta mask. This disease was ascribed by Mary's enemies to the result of poison, by her friends to the result of Darnley's excesses.

Page 238, line 25

It was a complaint against Mary that she lodged Darnley, at Kirk-in-Fields, the place of his death, in 'a beggarly house'.

Page 239, lines 2 to 4

A transcript of the Letter.

Page 239, lines 8 and 9

A transcript of the Letter.

HYMN TO VENUS

Page 241, line 3

'seeds of petrification, Gorgon of itself.'

— Sir Thomas Browne, 'Of Vulgar Errors'.

SPRING MORNING

Page 244, line 1

'Having accomplished the thunders of night-wandering Zagreus.'

This beautiful and mysterious fragment was preserved by Porphyry, and the translation is given by Dr. Jane Ellen Harrison in 'Themis'. She enquires, 'What are the thunders, and how can they be accomplished?'

As I have used the phrase, the thunders refer to the rising of the sap, and the blood in the heart, the ferment in the spring night.

Page 244, line 21

'The rites of the Croconides.'

These were Greek minor rites, supposed to make the flowers of the saffron fertile.

Page 245, line 3

The House of Gold was the name given to the ante-chamber to the Tombs of the Kings of Egypt.

THE COAT OF FIRE

Page 250, lines 23 to 26

contain references to the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

Page 251, lines 25 to 36

Lines 25 to 36 refer to the Buddha's Fire Sermon.

THE SHADOW OF CAIN

Page 255, lines 8 to 11

' . . . the Point that flows
Till it becomes the line of Time . . . an endless positing
Of Nothing, or the Ideal that tries to burgeon
Into Reality through multiplying.'

— A reference to Oken, *op. cit.*

Page 255, lines 13 and 14

Arthur Rimbaud's 'Metropolitan'.

Page 257, line 22

' . . . monstrous bull-voices of unseen fearful mimes.' — A fragment of the lost play by Aeschylus, *The Edonians*.

Page 257, line 26

'Irenaeus expressed it so elegantly as it is almost pity if it be not true. "Inseminaties est ubique in Scripturis, Filius Dei," says he. The Son of God is sowed in every furrow.' — John Donne, Sermon XI.

Page 258, line 6

Transcript of an actual report by an eye-witness of the bomb falling on Hiroshima. — *The Times*, September 10, 1945.

Page 258, lines 20 and 23

Founded on a passage in Burnet's *Theory of the Earth*.

Page 259, lines 13 to 15

These are references to descriptions given by Lombroso and Havelock Ellis of the marks and appearance borne by prenatally disposed criminals.

Page 259, lines 25 and 26

'Also we must say that this or that is a disease of Gold, and not that it is leprosy.' — *Paracelsus*, Appendix I, Chapter VI.

Page 260

'Gold is the most noble of all, the most precious and primary metal. . . . And we are not prepared to deny that leprosy, in all its forms, can be thereby removed from the human frame.' — *Paracelsus*.

Page 260, lines 9 to 14 and 16, 17

These verses also contain references to Hermetic Writings.

Page 261, lines 4 and 5

John Donne, Sermon CXXXVI.

THE CANTICLE OF THE ROSE

Page 262, lines 7 to 13

These verses contain references to Oken.

Page 263, lines 3 to 5

Transcript of an eye-witness' description of Nagasaki after the falling of the atomic bomb.

Page 263, line 32

Anturs of Arthur, 1394.

Page 263, line 33

Wyclif, *Selected Writings*, vol. I.

THE END

